The Autolycus of the Bookstalls

THE AUTOLYCUS
OF THE
BOOKSTALLS

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To

BERTRAM DOBELL,

THE

COMPLETE BOOKMAN.

NOTE

The following chapters have all appeared during the past few years in different London newspapers,—six in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, nine in the *Daily News*, five in the *New Age*, and one in the meteoric *Londoner*. To the Editors of those four journals I am indebted for permission to reprint.

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AN AUTOLYCUS OF THE BOOKSTALLS

It has sometimes seemed to me that the owners of the "proud libraries" which Walt Whitman begged should not be shut against his poems know nothing of the keenest pleasure that comes to the book-lover among his books. As one who has long been an Autolycus of the bookstalls, a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles from the twopenny box, I can say that among the finest delights of book acquisition has been the aimless hunting with which I have turned over the piled-up treasures of the bookstalls, either ranged along the kerbstone in the poorer

districts, or among the gregarious stores of old Booksellers' Row (call it not Holywell Street!) and of that newer Booksellers' Row which has sprung up in Charing Cross Road.

There is, no doubt, a real delight in book-hunting as the term is generally understood, in having a "subject," and seeking everywhere for anything bearing in any way upon it. The instinct of the hunting animal is brought into play and diverted—the seeker after big game, instead of tracking the tiger in the jungles of Bengal, or the grizzly in his fastnesses in the Rockies, hunts, say, Aldines and Elzevirs in the highways and byeways where civilised men most do congregate. Such find a pleasure in their chase, no doubt, and are acquainted with the keen thrill of satisfaction which attends the acquisition of a rarity, but greater, as it seems to me, is the delight of Autolycus; with a ready appreciation of a hundred subjects, with a taste most catholic, he finds his pleasure in every street that boasts a bookshop; he is liker to your poet than to your hunter, finding inspiration in surroundings seemingly most adverse. Such an Autolycus—I may speak, I hope, as one of a large family, numbering Charles Lamb

among the most glorious of its ancestors—could not always render a reason for the purchase of a certain book, any more than the poet could explain to the understanding of the Utilitarian why it was that he paused to drink in the beauty of the flower which arrested his attention.

Standing among my books after some twenty years of Autolycusising, and glancing over the ever-growing shelves, I am struck by the way in which such a collection is divisible into four or five sharply-defined classes, according to the manner in which they have been acquired. The books bought as mood, governed by price, has dictated during long hauntings of metropolitan bookstalls form a class by themselves; secondly, there are the presentation copies from author-friends; next come the copies obtained during some years as reviewer of miscellaneous literature; and then those books-which-are-no-books—as Lamb happily expressed it—the mere tools of the literary craftsman in works of reference, guides, annuals, *et hoc genus omne*. Such classification is, of course, not final; it does not allow for inevitable overlappings. There *are* presentation copies which we might have obtained by purchase *if we had not known the authors thereof*;

there *are* works of reference that deservedly rank with literature and not with Elia's *biblia abiblia*—the "Encyclopædia Britannica," to wit. Still, broadly speaking, the classification holds good, and of all the groups that which is to me the most attractive is the first. It is—I hope that my author-friends will not cut me off with review copies for the confession—as a whole even more attractive than the presentation group, rich as that is in intimate personal associations. "A book's a book although there's nothing in't," wrote a poet who gave us many volumes of a more positive sort; a book is never as much a book, I would say, as when a sacrifice has been made to obtain it. Some of the volumes dearest to Autolycus are assuredly those to the purchase of which went a part—sometimes the greater part—of his "dinner-money" in his clerkship days. Pleasant, indeed, were those noon hours spent in Booksellers' Row—with an occasional excursion to Farringdon Street, Aldgate, or the New Cut—bright oases in the day's journeyings through deserts of arid figures; and glorious, indeed, were the modest biblical "finds" obtainable at so slight a sacrifice.

Musing on these old purchases, I have glanced here and there over my shelves, picking out friends first made in days that would be dull indeed in memory but for these associations. Here is the Cromwellian "Flagellum" of Carlyle's "poor Carrion" Heath, with additions by Grangerising and marginalia-writing owners of pronounced Royalist proclivities, picked up for a few pence from a wayside barrow. Here is a sixteen-page autobiography of William Cobbett, published in 1816 for fourpence, and warranted on the title-page to contain "as much as a half-crown pamphlet"—picked up for a penny a few years ago from an *olla podrida* of ephemeral literature. Here is a copy of the second edition of "An Essay on Criticism," written by Mr Pope, for which was paid the same insignificant sum of one penny. Small sacrifices these, even for Autolycus when most impecunious. One of his earliest purchases was a single volume small-type reprint of Pope's works, obtained to satisfy a boyish wish—fired by quotations—to read the "Iliad" in its entirety; as the boy Cobbett had sacrificed a meal for "The Tale of a Tub," he did the same in unconscious imitation for Pope's "Poetical

Works." That poor tattered paper-covered volume has gone I know not whither, for in happy hour its possessor lighted upon the entire works of Pope, in fifteen volumes, whole calf, unstained, and as fresh as though they had remained unopened in some proud library—too proud for use!—since they were printed in 1770. The whole fifteen volumes were willingly handed over by the dealer in exchange for three shillings and sixpence. Pence, and but a few in the pocket at a time have, however, sufficed to add incalculable wealth to the store.

At various times, and at various places, at prices ranging from twopence to as many shillings, have been obtained friends that are such for all time. Here are "The Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral, of Sir Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, Viscount St Alban, with a Table of the Colours of Good and Evil. Whereunto is added the Wisdom of the Ancients. Enlarged by the Honorable Author himself; and now more exactly Published" (1673). The title-page, with its triple insistence upon the personality of the "honourable author," should afford a nice reproof for those inexact persons, who, following Macaulay and other authorities, *will* speak

of Lord Bacon. The next book I take down gives me pause, for surely nothing short of a love for everything bearing the name of the author of "The Vicar of Wakefield" could have dictated the purchase of "Poems for Young Ladies. In Three Parts: Devotional, Moral, and Entertaining. The Whole being a Collection of the Best Pieces in our Language. By Dr Goldsmith." It throws a curious light upon the literary taste of the time to find that Goldsmith borrowed from "Paradise Lost" without acknowledgment; Mr Pope, Mr Prior, Dr Parnell, Mr Collins, etc., were evidently names to conjure with, but "Mr Anon" seems to have been better appreciated than Mr Milton, and that despite Addison's eulogy of half-a-century earlier. It is strange to find that all "the best pieces in our language" were written between the days of Edmund Waller and those of Collins! Another time, for the price of one penny—the monetary standard always becomes especially ridiculous when applied to literature,—was picked up the two volumes in one of *The North Briton* (1784), in which John Wilkes made his sustained and caustic attack on Lord Bute; double that sum bought the volume of

The Freeholder (1716), Addison's single-handed successor to *The Spectator*.

Southey, whose genius is nowadays more or less under a cloud of neglect, has provided Autolycus with two "finds," in which he takes perennial delight; of neither of them would he have known anything had he not snapped them up from the seemingly dingy treasure-houses which he haunts. One is a massive volume of upwards of a thousand pages—a stinging commentary on poor Goldsmith's conventional "Best Pieces"—and it is entitled "Select Works of the British Poets from Chaucer to Jonson, with Biographical Sketches by Robert Southey, Esq., L.L.D." Issued by Longmans in 1831, this is one of the richest single volumes in existence—rich not only in generally accepted poetical treasure which may be obtained in a dozen editions, but also in works not easy to secure. Within its covers are to be found Tusser's "Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry." Skelton's "Colyn Clout," and "Philip Sparow," Hawes' "Pastime of Plesure," Drayton's "Poly-olbion" (in its entirety!), Phineas Fletcher's "Purple Island," and his brother's sacred poems, Habington's

"Castara," etc. These are but some of the least easily obtainable works included in this biblical gold-mine (to use a simile appreciable by a commercial-minded folk). There are besides—again to name only a selection—the whole of "The Faerie Queene," and poems by Donne, Withers, Lovelace, Drummond, Carew, Fulke Greville, Gascoigne, etc. Compelled to limit himself to the reading of one book, what lover of poetry would not unhesitatingly decide upon this library in a single volume? The other work of Southey's for which Autolycus feels a strong regard is "The Doctor," the first five volumes of which, published anonymously during the author's lifetime, were picked up a few years ago for half-a-crown. This strange medley, charged with all manner of learning, yet never loaded with it, is one of the most delightful of works in that class of what might be called inconsequent books—books in which the author gossips on wisely, profoundly, humorously, by turns, on all manner of subjects as they arise. For the sake of those poor folk—Autolycus pities them from the bottom of his heart—who read none but new books, or old books new-issued, it is to be wished that

some enterprising publisher would give us a fresh edition of the fascinating "Doctor," acquaintance with whom is at once a source of much entertainment and a liberal education in Literature.

It is impossible to bring within the purview of a single chapter all the fruits gathered from the bookstalls, and I have named but one or two "finds" that have been taken more or less at haphazard from the shelves. They serve to show that to-day, as in the days of Dibdin, the second-hand bookshops yet have in them something better than tattered copies of the dominant novel, either in its superseded three-volume form, or in the paper covers of its latest manifestation. There are other pleasures of the Autolycus of the bookstalls which might be mentioned. There is an unquestionable delight in buying an odd volume and haunting the stalls in a search for its companions. For a single penny, some eighteen years ago, I purchased Tennyson's "Queen Mary," in the neat red cloth "Cabinet edition." Thenceforth, there was, besides the general pleasure of turning over the bookstall wares, the delight of occasionally picking up a fresh volume of the series, until

gradually—it took about ten years—the set of fourteen volumes was completed. Another "hunt" of the same kind has been for the original issues of the pocketable volumes of the companionable Bayard Series—a hunt which still gives pleasure, for there is the hope that some day with that luck which attends Autolycus upon his wanderings he may add Mr Swinburne's "Coleridge's Christabel, and other Imaginative Poems" to its many-coloured companions. Then, too, there is the joy which comes when lighting upon the unique in unexpected places—as when on "picking up" a copy of Bentham's "Fragment on Government" it was found to be enriched with the autograph of Cardinal Manning. The pleasures of the Bookstall Autolycus are manifold, and though the days when he could acquire rare folios for a few shillings have gone or become as rare as angels' visits, yet is there a perennial delight in snapping up such unconsidered trifles as those of which a few are here indicated.

SOME KERBSTONE LIBRARIES

Books—we have it on the word of a hundred men who have devoted their whole lives to the writing of them—afford an unending solace for humanity in all its trials. Man, indeed,—and I take no credit for the discovery of so obvious a definition — may be differentiated from the rest of animate nature by being classified as "the reading animal." It is true that, from time to time, in country fair or Metropolitan hall of varieties, a pig, a dog, or a horse has been shown so far humanised, or de-brutalised, as to be able to pick out, at command, one or other of the six and twenty arbitary signs which are to us as the mystical and complex key to all knowledge human and divine.

It is when one has got far beyond the b, a, ba, of the infant school (and the learned pig!) that the true delights of the wonderful art become manifest; and how different from all

other arts, in that it can be enjoyed to the full, or *almost* to the full—for possession does count, after all—by those to whom Fortune has dealt her favours in the skimpiest fashion. Well have I known this for a fact from days when I was as the boy in Mary Lamb's poem. Have I not had many a half-fearful glance well on into a volume before very shame — the knowledge that, if challenged, I had not the wherewithal to make it mine—has made me replace it on the stall? Have I not gone on my way, my memory enriched, perchance by some sweet lyric from the page of Herrick, or with half-a-dozen sounding lines from Chapman's Homer ringing in my brain, while the worthy dealer (all dealers in books are worthy — that may be taken as an axiom) who furtively glanced at my pockets to see if they bulged unduly, knew nothing of that which I was carrying away in my mind, and, indeed, he was nothing the poorer, and I might yet return and make the soberly-clad volume of the "Hesperides" or the tattered "Iliad" my own?

But if the book-loving Autolycus when penniless may pilfer true riches—and keep on

the right side of the law while doing so—when he can jingle a few coppers in his pocket, then is he in excellent case. He may make choice of many wares. He may, like his Bohemian namesake of the "Winter's Tale," plead that he is but "a poor fellow, sir," but he has that which can make him rich indeed. He may, like the youth William Cobbett, be wanting a meal, and hesitate between the opposing attractions of mere sordid bread and cheese, and some such treasury of good things as "The Tale of a Tub." As to his choice, who can doubt but that it will be even like young Cobbett's; for who does not remember the sturdy ex-ploughboy's account of how he bought the Dean's immortal work, flung himself under the shelter of a haystack, and forgot for the nonce that for the human animal dinners are necessary.

With but few coppers in his pocket, the bookstall Autolycus may consider himself a veritable prince among bibliographers. He can sally to one of those kerbstone libraries scattered about the Metropolis, and spend an hour in turning over the riches displayed on many a coster's barrow. He may search through a

load of works on religion — marked at very low prices!—and taking in theology at every pore, may search through innumerable volumes of dry-as-dust divinity, perhaps without any other reward than that purely physical delight which comes to him from the mere handling of books. A glance at the covers of most suffices; occasionally there is a temptation to turn to the title-page, and, rarely — all too rarely in such a medley—he lights upon some such piece of "riches in a little room" as a copy of Barrow's "Sermons Against Evil Speaking," or a copy of the many-editioned "Imitatione." The chances are, however, that to an Autolycus who is a mere book-lover, and not also a theological student, there will be nothing sufficiently attractive, and he will pass on to the next truck-load of literary wares.

We are in Aldgate! At our back are tea-shops, tobacconists, eating-houses, and various other of those specialised trafficking centres which spring up wherever mankind congregates. To our right the busy thoroughfare stretches away, away through miles of the wonderful world of East London to that other wonderful

world of the docks. To our immediate left is a series of low-browed butchers'-shops, with narrowing openings leading up to the hideous shambles, and farther away on the left is the City. And what lies in front? For Autolycus nought but a series of book-laden barrows, with a background of moving tram-cars and a row of shops. And an excellent series of barrows it is, as Autolycus is not slow in finding out. Here he spends an hour or more turning over many volumes, some of which he has seen at the same spot on earlier visits, hesitating over the purchasing of various works, and debating within himself as to whether he shall return to his lodging with a small tome containing the Latin letters written for Cromwell by John Milton, or a worn leather-bound copy of Bishop Burnet's "Life of the Earl of Rochester."

Or it may be Autolycus has not penetrated so far into the City, but stops at one of the barrows in the Farringdon Road, and rummages among the biblical flotsam and jetsam gathered there, for he is the possessor of several trifles carried thence — unconsidered trifles to the crowds of passers-by, but valuable to the

snapper-up. From kerbstone libraries north about Islington, west on the Edgware Road, east in the region of Mile End, from transpontine thoroughfares about the Old Kent Road or the New Cut, ay, and even from the far suburbs, has Autolycus gathered those unobtrusive books in which he takes delight. For him there is no circulating library but that which is pushed along the streets by those ill-dressed philanthropists, those truest dispensers of truest wisdom, who in exchange for our poor coppers give that silent speech which is enshrined in books and which is more truly valuable than the hoarded silver and gold of the poor wealth-ridden miser.

OF END PAGES

At times I take up a book of to-day with some impatience when I find a small volume fattened out to look like a large one by having a copy of the publisher's catalogue bound up at its latter end—a penn'orth of matter to an intolerable quantity of "ads." I look, however, with kindlier eyes on similar end pages in the much prized trifles which are picked up on my bookstall wanderings. They did not overdo the thing in the olden days. And, what is more, they did it much better, for they could often devote more space to individual books. Idle curiosity made me lately take from my shelves two or three odd volumes picked up at various times, and confine my attention merely to the end pages devoted to book-advertisements. Arranging these chronologically, there comes first Bishop Burnet's "Some Passages of the Life and Death of the Right Honourable John, Earl of Rochester, who Died

the 26th of July, 1680." This was "Printed for Richard Chiswel, at the Rose and Crown in St Paul's Church-Yard, 1680." (I must confess to a weakness for these old imprints.) The last eight pages are devoted to a list of "books printed for and sold by Richard Chiswel," and a perusal of them shows several works which yet find their places in publisher's lists. Here are Hobbes's "Leviathan," Bacon's "Advancement of Learning," Brown's "Religio Medici" (he did not spell Sir Thomas's name correctly, but no matter); here also are named many books familiar to the student of bibliography, the titles of which would have no significance for the ordinary reader, besides some others which are at least entertaining as presented in the brevity of single lines. Here are offered "Crums of Comfort" and a "Guide to Heaven" without any suggestion as to the authors or as to the sordid price at which such valuable volumes were to be acquired, although the useful information is given that their size is "vicesimo quarto." For the rest here are named legal books, political books, medical books, translations of the classics (and a good few of them in the original), and, outnumbering

the rest, theological books — from visitation sermons to "Caryl on Job compleat, 12 Parts." In heraldry we have "Sir Will. Dugdale's Baronage of England, in two Vol.," while in unclassifiable departments we have "The Compleat Clerk" and "The Posing of the Parts" (whatever that may be!) and even a hint at punning in "*Grew's* Idea of Philological Hist. continued on Roots." A book in this old list is often given without any author's name, and only here and there is any price mentioned, the classification being according to the size of the paper used. With these old folk the *book* was the thing.

The next volume the end pages of which I examine is Rochefoucauld's "Moral Maxims and Reflections" which were "Printed for Richard Sare, at Gray's Inn Gate, in Holborn, MDCCVI." A quarter of a century had apparently made but little difference in the bookseller's way of advertising his wares, and we find again but small attention given to price and scant courtesy to authors ('twas ever thus with publishers!) and again we find a large preponderance of works of a religious nature, but far fewer of these are directed against the

Church of Rome. Aesop's "Fables," Erasmus's "Select Colloquies," the "Work of Flavius Josephus," and the "Turkish Spy" were all offered to the clients of Richard Sare, but the only quotable items — the only trifles worth snapping up from this brief publisher's list— are the following:—"A short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage, with the Sense of Antiquity upon this Argument"; "A Defence of the short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage, etc., being a reply to Mr Congreve's Amendments, etc., Octavo"; "A second Defence of the short View, etc., in answer to a Book intituled, 'The Ancient and Modern Stages vindicated,' 8vo." After a couple more items are given we are informed "the Five last by Mr Collier," and are at once aware that we have stumbled across contemporary notice of a fierce discussion, echoes of which are occasionally heard even to the present day. The "Mr Collier" of the announcement was none other than the famous non-juring divine, Jeremy Collier, whose zeal against the playhouses and all they stood for made him a formidable opponent even of the witty Congreve himself.

The next book introduces the name of a publisher familiar to all readers of "The Dunciad," for it is "The Idylliums of Theocritus, with Rapin's Discourse upon Pastorals. Made English by Mr Creech," and "Printed for E. Curll, at the Dial and Bible against St Dunstan's Church in Fleet Street, 1713." Mr Curll gives but four pages of the publications of his "chaste press," and these deal with only sixteen works, yet there are some significant changes when we compare the list with our earlier ones. Theology has dropped away, and its place has been taken by that class which is nowadays indicated in second-hand book dealers' catalogues as "curious." It is not necessary to find room for all Mr Curll's announcements as he makes them, but the list is sufficiently interesting to bear summarising. It is as follows, the numbers being Mr Curll's:—1. Sir Bulstrode Whitlocke's Memorials of the English Affairs, etc. 2. Sir Orlando Bridgman's Conveyances, Vol. II., etc. 3. The Works of the Right Honourable the Earls of Rochester and Roscommon, etc. 4. The Jewish History of Flavius Josephus, etc. (always a sure card with old-time booksellers). 5. The Works of Mr

William Shakespear. Vol. VII. containing Venus and Adonis, Tarquin and Lucrece, and all his Miscellany Poems, etc. 6. The Works of Monsieur de la Bruyere, etc. 7. Memoirs relating to the Impeachment of Thomas Earl of Danby (now Duke of Leeds), in the year 1679, etc. 8. The History of Addresses, from their first Original under Oliver Cromwell, to the Tryal of Dr Sacheverell, 8vo. Price 4s. 9. The History of the Revolutions in England, under the Family of the Stuarts, etc. 10. Secret Memoirs of the Duke and Dutchess of Orleans, intermix'd with the Amorous Intrigues and Adventures of the most eminent Princes of the Court of France. Written by Madame D'Aunoy, etc. 11. The Works of Monsieur Boileau, etc. 12. The Genuine Works of Monsieur de St Evremond, etc. 13. Musæ Britannicæ, being a curious Collection of Latin Poems by the most eminent Hands, etc. 14. The Satire of Titus Petronius Arbiter, a Roman Knight, with the Fragments found at Belgrade, An. 1688. Adorn'd with Cuts, pleasantly representing the lascivious Intrigues of Nero's Court. Printed with an Elzevir Letter, in a neat Pocket-Volume, being the correctest Edi-

tion extant, 12mo. Price 2s. 6d. in Calf, 2s. in Sheeps Leather. 15. Mr Rowe's Translation of Callipædia, or, the Art of getting beautiful Children, a poem, etc. 16. The Antiquities of St Peter's, or the Abbey Church of Westminster, etc. Not a bad list on the whole, and while fiction, as we understand it, is still absent, we have those "secret memoirs," etc., in which we may, perhaps, not inaptly find the germ of the popularity of the modern novel.

In the books issued during the latter half of the eighteenth century the "end pages" reveal the increasing vogue of the novel, to say nothing of the rapid growth in the numbers of books sent out by a given publisher; here, indeed, may be found a really fascinating history of literature. I even finish my brief survey of old end pages with a half-kindly feeling towards the publishers of to-day who bind up fifty-page catalogues of permanent interest with biblical ephemera—justifying to some Autolycus of the future the production of that for which the critic of the day finds little excuse.

OF AUTOGRAPH COPIES

A COIN, a feather, and other things that may pass from hand to hand have, at different times, inspired speculative writers to follow their varying fortunes in a story. It is not, alas! given to Autolycus to possess the power of communicating to his quill-tip the electric spark of the romancer, otherwise he would like to follow the fortunes of a book—to take, say, an early copy of the English Bible, or a copy of the first folio Shakespeare, and follow it through its successive ownerships from the time of its issuing from the press to these early days of the twentieth century, when it reposes among the most valued possessions of a rich bibliophile. Other books than such rarities as these may also excite our curiosity, copies which show by bookplate or inscription that they have belonged to men of note, have perhaps been read by them, perchance helped to inspire them. If in our bookstall wanderings we pick up books

that have belonged to Cardinal Manning, George Eliot, Sydney Smith, Thomas Noon Talfourd—and all of these have been snapped up during the past few years at Metropolitan stalls—we cannot help musing over the route by which they reached the fourpenny box, the shilling shelf, or other low-priced position from which a brief journey took them to their present position in the catholic collection of Autolycus.

Indeed, every volume that meets us on a stall has a story to tell other than that which is set down in type upon its pages, but it is a story that can only be dimly guessed at, except in the case of those unwelcome intruders, "remainder copies," and their tale is uniformly one of disappointed hopes. In 1874 a certain distinguished novelist of the present day became possessed of a copy of the then recently published Cabinet Edition of Tennyson's "Early Poems," and proudly wrote his name as possessor on the back of the portrait frontispiece. In the following year a minor poet of some repute in his day scrawled across the title-page of his new volume which he was sending to Lewes and George Eliot, "Mr and Mrs G. H. Lewes, with much respect from W. C. Bennet." In about

a decade and a half those two volumes had met on the bookshelves of Autolycus; the first coming thither *via* an oilshop in Seven Dials, and the second from Booksellers' Row. It would be curious to know by what transitional steps they had in so short a period—for what is fifteen years in the life of a book?—come to so low an estate. The Tennyson, too, as I have said, was snapped up from the most unlikely of places—Parnassus's very antipodes—an oil and colourman's shop in the Seven Dials—snapped up with a first edition of Ruskin's "Political Economy of Art" from among a couple of dozen volumes that modestly occupied a corner of a window ordinarily filled entirely with soap, soda, pickles, jams, and other items in that wonderful miscellany which makes up the stock-in-trade of an oilman in the poorer districts of the Metropolis.

Come how they may, however, be the journey direct, as in the case of many works among Autolycus's prized possessions, or whether by but dimly-guessed-at, round-about ways, those volumes are more than doubly welcome which have on them indubitable signs of one-time ownership by some famous man or woman.

AUTOLYCUS OF THE BOOKSTALLS

William C. Bennett was by no means a great poet, but he wrote many graceful and touching verses inspired by domestic themes—his "Baby May" is delightful—and his volume gains in interest from having his autograph on the title-page, and gains immeasurably so when we know that it is a book which was at one time handled by George Eliot. Then, too, though Tennyson's poems have no added beauty from having on them the autograph of a living novelist, yet the book has a special claim on our attention from the circumstance of its earlier ownership. For autograph copies—either those presented by their authors, or those made unique by the possessive inscription of notable persons—for such your Autolycus confesses to having (if the bull be permissible) a very strong weakness. Nothing gratifies him more when searching for other people's unconsidered trifles on the bookstalls than to find his treasure trove enriched by an autograph. Great was his delight, for example, when in Booksellers' Row one day, a few years ago, having bought for the sum of one shilling a copy of Bentham's anonymous "Fragment on Government," he found pencilled on the front end-paper the

signature of the great prince of the Roman Catholic Church, "Henry E. Manning"—with, unfortunately, no added date to show when the distinguished churchman became possessed of the famous "Fragment" by the clever inventor of the Panopticon. The title of this work, by the way, is given in the "Dictionary of National Biography," as with the sub-title of "a Comment on the Commentaries," but this first edition of the young philosopher's attack on Blackstone has no such happy supplement to its title.

Another find, snapped up unhesitatingly for half-a-crown, in the newer Booksellers' Row of Charing Cross Road, is a little five-volume set of Ariosto's "Orlando Furioso," which had belonged to the great wit and Canon of St Paul's —"humour's pink primate — Sydney Smith." Neat little volumes published "in Parigi, MDCCLXXXVI.," and ornately gilt in the foreign style, each tiny "tomo" has in it the bookplate of "Revd. Sydney Smith, 56 Green Street, Grosvenor Square." It was in 1839 that the witty Canon, on inheriting a fortune of £50,000 from his brother, moved to Green Street, and there he died six years later. Throughout the first two of these precious little

volumes there are marginal pencillings in the handwriting which Smith himself somewhere likened to the crawling of a spider over the paper. Yet another "autograph" copy is of a forgotten novel—a justly-forgotten novel, perhaps it might be said—entitled "The Dreamer and the Worker," by the author of the unforgetable "Orion." Unforgetable it is, by those who have read it, but it might, perchance, have been more widely remembered if the author, in a fit of disgust at a poetry-neglecting public, had not stamped it as an eccentric in the ranks of its fellows, by publishing it at the ridiculous price—ridiculous even for poetry—of one farthing. "Orion," Horne's novel, has written on the title-page of the first of its two volumes, the simple inscription, "Mr Justice Talfourd," showing that it had at one time belonged to that Judge, whose best-remembered work is the tragedy of "Ion." Here, too, is a more costly find — picked up through a catalogue, and not from chance encounter on a stall—in Thomas Taylor's translation of "The Golden Ass" of Apuleius, which had belonged to another dramatist, a friend of both Horne and Talfourd—Douglas Jerrold, to wit. The

title-page inscription runs: "Douglas Jerrold, 1836," in a small, neat handwriting, and in the book occurs a brief marginal note where the dramatist suggests that a certain incident recounted by Apuleius was, no "doubt, the origin of the French extravaganza, 'L'Ours et le Pacha.'"

Some of the books mentioned are of themselves important, but often a book owes its chief interest to the addition of an autograph, rather than to any inherent literary value. Among such one is generally inclined to put the minor poets of (to be safe) a couple of generations ago. In such a light, Autolycus looks upon a pair of volumes picked up for a few pence some years ago, one of which is by a Transatlantic visitor, who met both Talfourd and Jerrold while in England — and who promptly put his acquaintance into a book when he got home; here are a couple of blank-verse dramas, "Two Ways of Dying for a Husband" (that is, dying to lose him and dying to gain him), and their author was Nathaniel P. Willis, one of the least remembered of the American poets who made English reputations in the mid part of the nineteenth century.

"N. P. Willis to Alice Stacey," says the title-page. Willis has been dead for over thirty years. His fair friend of 1839 may be assumed to have long since lost all interest in the book, which now has a place in honoured company. The other minor poet's present to his friend is a volume of "Poetical Sketches by Alaric A. Watts," on the flyleaf of which the author has written "Henry Chatfield, Esq., with the Author's kind regards. Poems written between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one with two exceptions." Whether the exceptions were among the poems or among the years was left for Mr Henry Chatfield to surmise. Though forgotten now, Alaric A. Watts was a person of some importance in his day; in his early years he bade fair to be all things by turn, and nothing long, for, leaving school at the age of fifteen, he became successively usher, private tutor, temporary clerk in a public office, tutor again, and then, at the mature age of one-and-twenty (in 1818) sub-editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*; to him our grandfathers owed, in some degree, their fashion for literary and art miscellanies, started by his "Literary Souvenir" in 1824, and nearly thirty years later he edited

the first issue of "Men of the Time"; he was a journalist of some note in London, Leeds, and Manchester, and his life-story is interesting, if his work is out of date. Enough has been said to show that, with a few shillings and patience, a haunter of the bookstalls may soon make a small collection of unique books.

A question that naturally arises out of a consideration of these autograph copies is: What becomes of the presentation books sent by anxious authors to prominent public men? Indeed, I have often wondered what becomes of the thousands of volumes which unknown writers—especially the minim poets—shower upon ungrateful notabilities. Are they ever cut? are they read? do they find places on the lordly bookshelves? Mr Gladstone was for years credited with reading pretty well everything that reached him, and the frequent statement of this fact probably tended to increase the number of his presentation copies. Turning over the books on a stall in Oxford Street I once picked up — more by chance than design — a volume of "minor" poems. Written all over the fly-leaf was this inscription, dated from Edinburgh, January 1, 1894:

"Presented to the Right Hon. William Ewart Gladstone, Prime Minister, as an humble token of admiration, by the author." If it were known that the ultimate fate of copies presented to strangers with "the author's compliments" is the twopenny box (the book in question was marked one shilling when I saw it) surely the number would decrease. The writers might be spared some chagrin, while the recipients would be spared what is, I am persuaded, more frequently a source of annoyance than of gratification.

SOME "PIRATE" TREASURES

STOLEN pleasures are the sweetest, says a proverb with analogies in several languages—but the saying, if it were allowed to govern our line of conduct, might soon land us in a place where I am given to understand pleasures are few indeed, unless it be the pleasures that come of contemplation in solitude; and such pleasures I imagine are like to fly when the solitude is enforced. Many a lasting pleasure might come to any Autolycus of the Bookstalls were he to act upon the proverb and take those biblical rarities he comes upon which are priced beyond the reach of his flimsy purse. The proverb may, indeed, be a true one, but the whole of the Statute Book is compiled for the purpose of making painful any attempt to act upon it. Even the most modern of "pirates" are being legislated and treaty'd out of existence. I speak not of the William Kidds and Paul Joneses, those idols of our

boyhood; they were pirates who laid their hands on the mere sordid gold and other material treasure of their victims; but the pirate who is last to go before the progress of civilisation and the development of international amenities is a man of taste and discrimination for whom all authors whose works are honoured by piracy should have nought but kindly feelings. The publisher—the materialistic middleman—he, of course, might legitimately complain, but the author can surely have no reason for resenting the widening of his audience at the cost of a few beggarly "royalties"!

Autolycusising makes strange shelf-fellows, and lately, in glancing around my cases, I had the curiosity to pick out half-a-dozen volumes that had no right—according to the Statute Book—to be there. They are all products of the pirates' presses, or—and it comes to much the same thing—copies of editions which have no right to make their appearance in England. Of course, Autolycus should not encourage piracy; but in such a matter he sins, it is to be feared, in goodly company, for copies of these pirated or banished editions are to be

found exposed on every stall, and Autolycus pretends not to be better than his fellow-haunters of these same stalls or than those wayside keepers of the printed books who, I am assured, would often rather keep the tomes they sell than the pence they sell them for.

In the eighteenth century the pirates exercised their functions from the sister isle of Erin, the Dublin booksellers being ever ready to snatch up and re-issue in cheaper form any book that was likely to make a stir, and this not alone for their local public, but also with the object of underselling the London bookseller. Westward the tide of piracy took its way, and most of the nineteenth century pirate treasure has come from over the Atlantic (with some retaliations on Ralph Waldo Emerson and Co. by English publishers), although latter day improvements in international copyright law have changed matters somewhat in this regard, so that the day may come when "pirated" editions will be rarities, and the craze for collecting Aldines and Elzevirs, Strawberry Hill and Kelmscott Press publications, may give way to a craze for collecting the products of the pirate press—all genuine

editions to be, of course, rigorously excluded. Here is a hint for a moneyed connoisseur in search of a cult.

Too catholic in his tastes to be a connoisseur, it is not given to Autolycus to start the cult, but he may devote a few minutes of attention to these pirate treasures which he has drawn from among their shelf companions. Piracy and illegal importation have given me here a strange miscellany. Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyam, John Ruskin, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the Cowden-Clarkes, and Mr Herbert Spencer; such is the company I find grouped together on my desk by the circumstance of their origin. There should have been a five cent. George Meredith, but a friend borrowed it, and evidently felt that there was no moral obligation about returning a pirated booklet. The first volume I take up is a Tauchnitz edition of Rossetti's Ballads and Sonnets — bought, in despite of the Copyright Acts, at a London bookstall for sixpence. (The frequency with which these books are exposed for sale in London suggests that the Customs officers are not as keen in the interests of publishers and authors as they are in those of dutiable

articles). I like this book, for it has been in the possession of a true lover of the poet—a lover who has converted the paper-covered work into a unique copy by binding it for himself; it is re-garbed in parchment with "Whatman" end papers, and it is lettered with neat art on back and covers—a lasting proof of what may be done for a paper-backed book with a bit of parchment, a pen and ink, and taste, and the greatest of these is taste. It is matter for regret that we have no popular series of the best books similar in style and get up to the "Tauchnitz" — perhaps a publisher will take the hint. Or, better still, let the publishers agree among themselves (if that be possible) so that whenever the sale of a new work reaches a given number in its original form, it shall also be issued in a people's edition, such as was originally this visitor of mine from Leipzig. But a truce to suggesting what the publishers *might* do—Were *I* Khalif for a day!

To return to the treasures which have set out on their tortuous journey to my shelves under the black flag of piracy (emblazoned, of course, with an author's skull and funny

bones), or, if they have not done that, have at least been smuggled into a land whence they are supposed to be banished from the moment on which they were re-envolumed. The next book I take up is a narrow, slim one, parchment-bound again—they need stout jackets these biblical gentry who have to brave the dangers of the revenue officer's blades at the ports of entry into this free land. It is a product of the notorious Mr Mosher's press, nothing less than Edward Fitzgerald's version of Omar Khayyam's "Rubaiyat"—those quatrains which have gone on echoing through the centuries, to be gathered on the sounding-board of a Suffolk cottage and sent thence in increased richness and volume for all future generations. It is some years since a friend in need gave me this little gem at a time when the work was here kept out of the reach of all but moneyed readers. Never did I feel so grateful to a pirate as when he laid violent hands on this work and did with it what its legitimate owners should have done long before they did. We have societies for the prevention of cruelty to children and other animals—why have we no society for the prevention of cruelty

to books? A society which should compel a publisher not to limit narrowly the circle that a great work could reach. Contemplate the painful position of a work of genius compelled to give up to an *edition de luxe* what was meant for mankind!

Another writer, whose argosies long swelled the coffers of the Pirates and enriched the shelves of impecunious readers not his countrymen, was the late John Ruskin; and here the poor British book-lover felt that his acquisition of pirate treasure was at least plausibly defensible, in that he could not possess himself of the costly tomes to which for long years the apostle of art chose to restrict his teaching. Autolycus himself has had a pirated "Stones of Venice" —presented by a banker friend who had heard him inveigh (Autolycus was then young and unphilosophical) against piracy and all its works. 'Twas a severe test. He has himself picked up for a few cents at a New York book-store (hateful word that brackets books and bacon) a little work by Ruskin on "Fiction Fair and Foul." This was a reprint of review articles which he believes have not been published in book form in England, and has much of truth

which readers and authors of "fictitious literature" might study with advantage.

Another New York "find" which Autolycus made his own was a Transatlantic edition of the Cowden-Clarkes' "Recollections of Writers"—a book of pleasant literary gossip, with letters in it of Charles Lamb, Charles Dickens, Leigh Hunt, and other notabilities. In flimsy covers, too, he found there Mr Meredith's "Case of General Ople and Lady Camper" (then unobtainable in this country), and there, too, he picked up a half-century-old pirated copy of that delicious mixture of philosophy and drollery, "The Chronicle of Clovernook, with Some Account of the Hermit of Bellyfulle." Another London "find" of this nature—of philosophy all compact, but with recognition of drollery in an essay on "The Physiology of Laughter"—picked up at a suburban bookstall (it is a relief to get back from the book-store) was a collection of essays published in America in 1864 under the comprehensive title of "Illustrations of Universal Progress," and written, as the publisher informed his clients, by "Mr Herbert Spencer, of England." The years that have elapsed have carried the name and fame

of "Mr Herbert Spencer, of England," to all parts of the globe, and have seen the patient completion of that marvellous example of sustained thought, the "Synthetic Philosophy."

Pirates belong, for the most part, to the past; copyright agreements between nation and nation are making it ever more difficult for them to get a "haul." Cheaper production of books, and the growth of public libraries have even done away with the poor man's excuse for buying the cheap and (in a material sense) nasty products of the pirate's press, which exist now for the "collector." Carlyle's words of fifty-five years ago address themselves to but a small circle to-day, and it would be well if that small circle would take them to heart: "To unauthorised reprinters and adventurous spirits inclined to do a little in the pirate line, it may be proper to recall the known fact, which should be very present to us all without recalling, that theft in any sort is abhorrent to the mind of man; that theft is theft, under whatever meridian of longitude, in whatever 'nation,' foreign or domestic, the man stolen from may live, and whether there be any treadmill and gallows for his theft, or no apparatus of that kind."

A FOUNTAIN OF LIES
CROMWELLIAN

Not always is it given to Autolycus, on looking over the biblical flotsam with which chance and caprice have furnished his shelves, to recall the place and price of any given purchase. Often such base material facts are impressed upon his mind by contrasting the character of the book bought with the scene of its purchase, as when he secured for eightpence at an oil-shop in the Seven Dials a copy of the cabinet edition of Tennyson's "Early Poems," bearing the possessive autograph of a distinguished living novelist; or, when he bought a privately-printed volume of "Persian Poetry for English Readers" from an illiterate office-boy—giving in competition with a fellow-clerk, half-a-crown for that which the boy had obtained for twopence. In cases like these price and place of purchase are indelibly associated with the works obtained. It is far otherwise with other cases, for sometimes the subject has

of itself been such as to command the book's purchase, and price and place have been mere unconsidered incidents in the acquisition of desiderata.

With Autolycus such commanding subjects were at one time Oliver Cromwell, and the French Revolution. A man of peace himself, Autolycus has always had a taste for learning what he could about those two great periods of social upheaval on either side of the English Channel. Especially has Cromwell been to him a name with which to conjure. To see some fresh item of Cromwellian literature priced far above the possibilities of his modest expenditure was to be inspired with thoughts of appropriation by methods discountenanced by the selfish minority responsible for our laws. Among the books on this subject lighted upon—and happily so priced as to be purchasable without hesitation—is "Flagellum: or The Life and Death, Birth and Burial of O. Cromwell The Late Usurper: Faithfully Described. With An Exact Account of his Policies and Successes. Enlarged with many Additions. Printed for Randal Taylor, and are to be Sold at his Shop at the Signe of the Crown in Little Britain, 1672."

The very title of the book, with its quaint-

ness and the double insistence upon life and birth, death and burial, formed a recommendation; but, on opening the cover, to find that it had at one time belonged to a grangerising owner, made it additionally attractive. On the fly-leaf is pasted an old printed copy of a letter of Cromwell's, which is not included in Carlyle's magnificent collection, and may therefore, although not a significant one, be quoted. It runs:—

"Oliver Cromwell, Esq., Captaine Generall and Commander-in-Chief of the Armies and Forces raised and to be raised, by Authority of Parliament within the Commonwealth of England.

"To Henry Flamock, Preacher.

"By virtue of the power and authority to me devised from the Parliament of England, I doe hereby constitute and appoint you preacher to the garrison of Pendennis, whereof Sir Hardresse Waller, Knt., is Governor. Which said place you shall, by virtue of this Commission, receive into your charge; you are, therefore, dilligently to intend the execution thereof, and faithfully and duly to execute and to sound

all things incident and belonging thereunto. And the officers and souldiers of the said garrison are hereby required to acknowledge you as theire preacher. And you are likewise to observe and follow our orders directions, as you shall from time to time receive from myselfe, the governor, and the superior officers of the said guarrison, according to the discipline of warr. Given under my hand and seale this nineth day of Aprill, 1653.

"O. CROMWELL."

Pendennis Castle was in South Cornwall, near Falmouth. Opposite this letter is a quaint steel engraving of the man Cromwell as he appeared to the mind of his enemies. The upper part of the picture is filled with formal, louring clouds, amongst which is entwined a rope, the lower end fastened noosewise round the Protector's neck. Cromwell is shown clothed in a suit of mail, with a baton in his right hand, and apparently all unconscious of the disgraceful cord. Opposite the title-page is another portrait—a medallion-shaped steel engraving, showing the Protector's head and shoulders in profile. That two of the owners

of this book, during its two and a quarter centuries' journey from the Crown in Little Britain to my bookshelf, have been Royalists as rabid as the biographer is proved by the scribbled marginalia. On the back of the title occurs in an old hand the statement—

"Rejoycing in useless wickedness he defers Satisfaction to his late Death."

Then, in another handwriting, on page 173, an indignant marginalian has been inspired with this tremendous outburst:—

> "You Hipocrits leaue of your pranks
> You Murder men and then give thanks
> Leue of I say"

He could bombast it out no longer, and inspiration and consistency in spelling gave out together.

And now, as to the matter of this small, time-discoloured "Flagellum," was Autolycus persuaded by its perusal to a new view of the life and character of the Protector? or was he—well, to put it in all simplicity, he was amused! Oliver Cromwell died in 1659, and his son soon abdicated that power which he was not strong enough to sustain, and Charles the

Second, of profligate memory, attained to the throne of his fathers. This small so-called life of Cromwell, "the chief fountain, indeed, of all the foolish lies that have circulated about Oliver since," as a later historian says, was evidently produced at the time of "loyal" exultation on the "Happy Restoration"; it was written either by a man who heartily detested the men and methods of the superseded Commonwealth, or by one who—and it is the more probable—wished to curry favour with the triumphant faction. The title of the work betrays the bias of our author, and if it did not do so his preface "To the Reader" would dispel any doubts. On the very first page it is coolly declared: "No man either of Reason or Sobriety, of that party (*i.e.* the Parliamentary), can deny, but he was suck'd in by that *Pestilent Air* of his (*i.e.* Cromwell's) pious pretences, and therefore they will, I hope, accept of this Antidote for the future in good part." From the very outset Cromwell is discussed with vituperative mendacity, as not so much man as monster. Although our worthy flagellator regrets that the Protector's birth was not attended with any celestial or other prognosti-

catory phenomena, he finds in the very absence of such additional cause for suspecting and vilifying his subject! From the very first, says our wordy inventor of biographical data, Cromwell showed the inherent viciousness of his disposition; he would attend school diligently for a couple of weeks and then be a "Truant or *Otioso* for twice as many months"; he dreamed that he would be a king and "his Father was exceedingly troubled at it; and having angrily rebuked him for the Vanity, Idleness, and Impudence thereof; and seeing him yet persist in the same presumption, caused *Dr Beard* to whip him for it; which was done to no more purpose," etc.; then comes a charge serious almost as that of deer-stealing brought against the lad Shakespeare, of Stratford-on-Avon: "Amongst the rest of those ill qualities which *fructuated* in him at this Age, He was very notorious for *Robbing of Orchards*; a *puerile* crime, and an ordinary trespass, but grown so scandalous and injurious by the frequent spoyls and damages of Trees, breaking of Hedges and Enclosures committed by this *Apple Dragon*, that many solemn Complaints were made both to his Father and Master for redress thereof,

which missed not their satisfaction and expiation out of his hide, on which so much pains were lost, that that very offence *ripened* in him afterwards to the throwing down of all boundaries of Law or Conscience, and the stealing and tasting of the *forbidden fruit* of *Soveraignity*, by which (as the Serpent told him) *He should be like unto a God*."

It would be tedious as the author of "Flagellum" himself to go on instancing his long-winded passages of imagined *ana* designed to prove Cromwell's inherent and persistent wickedness. He gives us only 192 pages, but he makes the very minimum of biographical fact serve to spread over them, the rest is as edifying as his beginning instanced above. It is a quaint book this "Flagellum," well worth the few pence for which it was acquired, but by no means worth the time spent in its perusal. Turning to the pages of our modern restorer of the fame of Oliver Cromwell, we find that Thomas Carlyle knew this book, and can tell us the name of its author, and knew it for what it was worth Discussing the "Original Biographies of Cromwell," he says:—"The vituperatives are many; but the origin of them

all, the chief fountain, indeed, of all the foolish lies that have circulated about Oliver since, is the mournful brown little book called 'Flagellum, or the Life and Death of O. Cromwell, the Late Usurper,' by James Heath. . . . Heath's poor little brown lying 'Flagellum' is described by one of the moderns as a 'Flagitium,' and Heath himself is called *Carrion* Heath—as being 'an unfortunate blasphemous dullard, and scandal to Humanity;—blasphemous, I say; who, when the image of God is shining through a man, reckons it in his sordid soul to be the image of the Devil, and acts accordingly; who, in fact, has no soul, except what saves him the expense of salt; who intrinsically is Carrion and not Humanity:' which seems hard measure to poor James Heath . . . little other than a tenebrific Book; cannot be read except with sorrow, with torpor and disgust—and in fine, if you be of healthy memory, with *oblivion.* The latter end of Heath has been worse than the beginning was! From him, and his 'Flagellums' and scandalous Human Platitudes, let no rational soul seek knowledge."

DEATH-BED REPENTANCE

I WAS standing by the side of a costermonger's barrow near Aldgate, and was turning over a heap of books labelled "Two for a penny," when I lighted upon a small volume with a well-worn black leather cover,—"Some Passages of the Life and Death of the Right Honourable John, Earl of Rochester, who died the 26th of July, 1680. Written by his own Direction on his Death-Bed by Gilbert Burnet, D.D., London, Printed for Richard Chiswel, at the Rose and Crown in St Paul's Church-Yard, 1680." What it was which specially attracted me to the book I am unable to say. Bishop Burnet was, of course, a name familiar as that of the historian of his own times, while Rochester was known to me in the threefold character of poet, *roué*, and atheist. Whether it was that I was attracted to it as the life and death of a notorious *roué*, or by the train of reflection called up on seeing in such close

juxtaposition on the title-page the name of the right reverend bishop and the noted libertine, or by any other cause I know not. I had, it is true, a glimmering notion that the book was referred to by Dr Johnson in his "Lives of the Poets." I since find that I was right, for the man of strong opinions wrote of it as "A book which the critic ought to read for its elegance, the philosopher for its arguments, and the saint for its piety. It were an injury to the reader to offer him an abridgment."

I decided, then, to buy this book. Seeing, however, that the heaped-up wares were labelled "Two for a penny," and not "½d. each," I sought again among the plenitude of tracts, sermons, hymn-books, and o'er-scribbled school-books, for another find. I dived to the bottom of the pile, and pulled out a thick small octavo which turned out to be the complete poems—two volumes in one, well bound in whole calf—of no less important a person than the Right Honourable Joseph Addison. Without a moment's hesitation my mind was made up, I paid the penny, and walked off with that serene sense of satisfaction which comes over the buyer of second-hand books when he has got a "find."

DEATH-BED REPENTANCE

As a poet, John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, is, I take it, but little known to the present generation. His few poems are to be found but in old collections, and, when found, scarce repay the reading, except, perhaps, some of the satires, which show him possessed of considerable wit; for the rest, his songs and other poems are mainly of a coarse, licentious style, though written frequently in soft, flowing measure and conceitful manner. Typical of his writings—typical both of matter and manner—may be taken one verse:—

"Upon Drinking in a Bowl.

"Cupid and Bacchus my saints are
May drink and love still reign;
With wine I wash away my cares,
And then to love again."

I am not, however, concerned here with Rochester as a poet, but with him merely as he is represented in this little volume which I have snapped up for one halfpenny.

The waning hopes of the Stuarts were revived when, on the death of Oliver Cromwell, and after his son's brief exercise of undesired

power, they were brought back in the person of that dissolute good-for-nothing, the Merry Monarch. Beneath the stern but salutary sway of his Highness the Lord Protector, England had not only calmed down after the Civil War, but was in a fair way towards attaining a condition of steady prosperity; a spirit of quiet, reverent religion was abroad—perhaps a wee bit too ostentatiously so. This Puritanic phase of the England of the Commonwealth gives the years an aspect of rest which had been wanting ever since Henry VIII. had, as Defender of the Faith, established the Reformed Church in the country. Since the introduction of the doctrines of Luther, Protestantism and Romanism had been fiercely struggling for supremacy; now under Edward VI., the religion introduced by his father was more firmly established, only to be supplanted by the Church of Rome on the accession of Mary, with her unlimited and untiring persecution of the Protestant. Catholic Mary died, and her sister, succeeding her, persecuted the Romanists as resolutely. The cry from either side, in true Christian spirit, might have been, as Tennyson's Philip says:—

"The blood and sweat of heretics at the stake
Is God's best dew upon the barren field.
Burn more!"

Thus, alternately triumphant and triumphed over, the reformed religion finally became that of the Church of England by law established.

The country that had rested for a space in puritanical peacefulness was, after the Restoration, loud with riot and dissolution; a new era seemed to be inaugurated, and certainly far from a good one; religion came to be treated by men as a subject for jest and ribald comment; social life first showed signs of a widespread hollowness which could portend little of good for the State. Riot, debauchery, and daily dissoluteness came to be treated more and more as matters of gallantry that nations still unborn should rue—for, if there be any truth in the theory of heredity, what must be the effect on succeeding generations of such an age of licentiousness? A notorious age, of which John, Earl of Rochester, was one of the most notorious characters.

The outbreak of licence of thought and of practice which signalised the restoration of the

Stuarts, was a reaction from the preceding age of Puritanism. In the Metropolis this reaction was particularly noticeable and widespread, as was sure to be the case when it was not only countenanced but led by the King himself. In this "loose and lewd" age, John, Earl of Rochester, was distinguished as a debauchee even by his contemporaries, none of whom were too particular themselves. It was a time characterised by an outburst of unbelief, not the unbelief of philosophy, such as that which in its modern form may be said to date from the middle of the eighteenth century in France —the time and place of that great triumvirate, Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot—but at this distance it appears more like one of the fits of intermittent unbelief that characterise individual men when they first begin to think. "I am! Why? Whence? Whither?"—when, alternately doubting and attempting to believe, that period of unrest is lived through until it ends, in one instance, in religious enthusiasm, in another, in easy-going *professing* religion, and in another, in outspoken agnosticism :—

"There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds."

DEATH-BED REPENTANCE

In the preface to this book Bishop Burnet says, as though to disarm an obvious objection to it, that some "will censure it, because it comes from one of my profession, too many supposing us to be induced to frame such discourses for carrying on what they are pleased to call *our trade*." That is precisely the feeling which possessed me after finishing that which Dr Johnson had so greatly eulogised.

It somewhat detracts from the value of Rochester's recantation of his no-belief when we find that it took place, to use Burnet's own words, "when he was under a great decay of strength and loss of spirits." Also we cannot forget that it was written when Rochester could no longer reply, and that it is obviously more of a bolstering up of "our trade" than a plea for Christian religion. Now and then one is even inclined to believe that the conversion is as apocryphal as that of the dying Voltaire; and, indeed, grant it were true, of what value could it be that a man who in the full possession of his health and reason had the courage to say what he thought, should, when stricken by disease and with that instinctive fear of death which seems inherent

in all, grasp at any straw of faith offered to him?

John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, was born in April 1648. He succeeded to the earldom while yet very young, and appears to have passed through school and college as "an extraordinary proficient at his book." He went to the University at the time of the Restoration; and there, and thus early (he was but twelve) commenced his life of dissipation. To use the somewhat involved sentences of Bishop Burnet, "when he went to the University the general joy which overran the whole nation upon his Majesties Restauration, but was not regulated with that sobriety and temperance that became a serious gratitude to God for so great a blessing produced some of it's ill effects on him." Whether the return of Charles was so great a blessing is perhaps questionable; a study of the "Diary" of the pertinacious Pepys, certainly, gives a less partial view of the value of that same "blessing."

When Rochester returned from his travels—the "grand tour" was then just coming into vogue—he was made much of at Court, possessing, as he did, a graceful and well-shaped

person, a clever wit, "a modest behaviour natural to him, and a civility become almost as natural." In an atmosphere such as that of the Court of the profligate Charles, it is not to be wondered at that a man of Rochester's nature became noted as a libertine of the first order. It appears that his learning—he is described as the most learned nobleman of his age—had led him to doubt the truth of all religion; his re-conversion only took place after he was shattered, mentally, morally, and physically, by the continued excesses of several years.

It was not until within about a year of his death, when all but the mere spark of existence had gone, that Rochester met Bishop Burnet on terms of intimacy, and it is chiefly a history of that year which is contained in this volume which I have rescued from the halfpenny box. During this term of their acquaintanceship Burnet says that they frequently talked on "morality, natural and revealed religion, Christianity in particular." Rochester said, reasonably enough, that he had no remorse for his past actions as offences against God, but only as injuries to himself and to mankind. "Upon this subject," says Bishop Burnet, "I shewed

him the defects of philosophy for reforming the world: that it was a matter of speculation which but few either had the leisure or the capacity to inquire into. But the principle that must reform mankind must be obvious to every man's understanding." In this book, published after its subject's death, the divine has, of course, the best of the argument; but could Rochester have replied to Burnet's statement, as here set down, he would doubtless have pointed out that the very arguments against philosophy might be offered as plausibly against revealed religion. What principle could be less obvious than that of Burnet's involved creed? A Christianity of purer and more Christlike principles would doubtless be more "obvious to every man's understanding."

Some of Burnet's statements are almost comic in their *naïveté*, as when he says, "For that of the destruction of the Canaanites by the Israelites, it is to be considered, that if God had sent a plague among them all, that could not have been found fault with. If then God had a right to take away their lives, without injustice or cruelty, he had a right to appoint others to do it, as well to execute it by a more

immediate way: and the taking away people by the sword is a much gentler way of dying, than to be smitten with a plague or a famine. And for the children that were innocent of their father's faults, God could, in another state, make that up to them." The idea of an Omnipotent God acting unjustly by His creatures here, and "making it up to them" in the next world sounds somewhat ludicrous—it would, indeed, savour somewhat of blasphemy uttered by the lips of the laity.

"Therefore," continues the Bishop, treating only of that moral teaching which all acknowledge as the great value of Christianity, and studiously ignoring all objections to the Church, "Therefore, I desired him to consider the whole Contexture of the *Christian Religion*, the Rules it gives, and the Methods it prescribes. Nothing can conduce more to the peace, order and happiness of the World, than to be governed by its Rules. Nothing is more for the Interests of every man in particular: The Rules of Sobriety, Temperance and Moderation were the best Preservers of life, and which was perhaps more, of Health. Humility, Contempt of the Vanities of the

World and the being well employed, raised a man's Mind to a freedom from the Follies and Temptations that haunted the greatest part. Nothing was so Generous and Great as to supply the Necessities of the Poor, and to forgive Injuries: Nothing raised and maintained a man's Reputation so much as to be exactly just and merciful; Kind, Charitable and Compassionate: Nothing opened the powers of a man's Soul so much as a calm Temper, a serene Mind, free of Passion and Disorder: Nothing made Societies, Families, and Neighbourhoods so happy, as when these Rules which the Gospel prescribes took place *of doing as we would have others do to us, and loving our Neighbours as ourselves.*" All this, the essence of the teaching of Christ, might as well have been adduced in favour of many another philosophy and religion. Afterwards Burnet goes on to say that "*the Christian Worship* was also plain and simple; suitable to so pure a Doctrine." In this I can fully understand that his spiritual patient did not entirely acquiesce.

After doubting, then openly disbelieving and denying, Rochester finally subscribed to the tenets of the Church of England, having been

re-converted by the arguments of Bishop Burnet, "and on *Monday*, about Two of the Clock in the Morning, he died, without any *Convulsion*, or so much as a groan."

Here, in this small black leather covered volume, it is true we have the arguments mostly from one side, yet we may take the whole, I think, as fairly representative of the soul struggles of individuals — that struggle which is in reality the growth of many centuries of doubt and faith, a struggle which may be temporarily overcome, but which can never permanently be decided. Ever there is some re-awakening agent — a chance word— an unbidden thought will cause the struggle to recommence as fiercely as ever. Spiritual nostrums, which are ever being offered by the quacks of various sects, each of which narrows salvation to its own few members, are useless. They may subdue the struggle for awhile, as wet fuel will lessen a fire, but like the fire the struggle will, after being apparently smothered, re-assert itself with redoubled vigour.

Throughout the book, as I have said, it is impossible to forget that it is a Bishop of the

Church who is arguing, and I scarcely feel inclined, on concluding the reading of the small volume, to echo in any way the criticism of Dr Johnson: "The critic ought to read it for its elegance," says he, an elegance which I find decidedly wanting, for the style is in parts most difficult and involved. Its arguments, for which the philosopher is to read it, I have here indicated, and of them I need say no more; its piety I will not deny. "It were an injury to the reader," concludes the Doctor, "to offer him an abridgment." If that be so, I apologise for the injury—which, notwithstanding, I deny.

A POLITICAL "LAST WILL"

Not always in lighting upon early editions of acknowledged classical works does an Autolycus of the bookstalls find his pleasure—such often attends upon the acquisition of out-of-the-way volumes—books which may have been of some importance in their day, but which have dropped out of sight of all readers except, perchance, of a casual student here and there. Of such biblical moribundities there are a-many on my shelves — books picked up sometimes out of a sentimental regard for dead and gone (and well - nigh forgotten) authors, sometimes on account of a momentary interest in a certain subject, sometimes out of idle curiosity, and sometimes out of a mere desire to extend shelf hospitality to an unconsidered trifle which has lain too long neglected on the stalls. Sometimes, indeed, many of us would be hard put to it to render a reason for a given purchase a few years after the purchase had been made.

Thus it is that my own collection now and again affords me fresh surprise. A reference in some recent desultory reading to the great Cardinal Richelieu reminded me of a small book bought a dozen years ago for twopence, and, taking it from the shelf, I determined to read it at last. The title-page runs—we have simplified our titles since this work was sent to press—"The Political Will and Testament of that Great Minister of State, Cardinal Duke de Richelieu; from whence Lewis XIV., the present French King, has taken his Measures and Maxims of Government. In two Parts. Done out of French. London, Printed, and are to be Sold by the Booksellers of London and VVestminster, MDCXCV."

An "Advertisement to the Reader" explains that this is the fourth edition of the work — which was published in the original French at Paris in 1664 — and says, in the bombastic language of the time, "The World would have reason to Wonder, that this Political Testament of Cardinal Richelieu, could have been concealed so long" (Richelieu died in 1641) "did not the Consequence of it, and the use to which it was designed, con-

vince us that he never intended the publishing thereof. But whereas it is the Fate of Mysterys to have a certain Date, and that it is not impossible not to confide all things of this Nature to some Indiscreet Persons, there is no reason to wonder at their falling at last into Liberal hands, who are glad to Impart them to the World." There is much that is briefly interesting even to-day in this small volume from so different a past, yet it is not easy to agree with the writer of the advertisement aforementioned as to the great value of the document. At times a doubt will arise as to the genuineness of the "Testament," whether it is not rather an ingenious fiction, but the "authorities" include it among Richelieu's works, and who is Autolycus that he should cast doubts upon their accuracy? Richelieu was a man of consummate ability, of an inflexible will, one whose strong hand and cold heart enabled him, as it has been said, to make France what he desired her to be, and the France which he made remained such up to the cataclysm of the Revolution. Better would it have been had the great Imperialist who dominated France during the critical days

of the seventeenth century been a wiser statesman. This "Testament" is supposed to have been designed for the private ear of Louis XIII., but many passages in it are obviously addressed to a wider public. The King followed his Minister to the grave within six months, and a child of less than five years ruled France with, as his most powerful Minister, the Cardinal Mazarin. More forceful than any written will and testament of Richelieu's was the teaching which he had imparted to Mazarin, his immediate successor.

Here I am concerned but with the written word of Richelieu, the crafty Churchman, the astute and unprincipled statesman, who—such is the perversity of human nature — wished chiefly to shine as a man of letters; he founded the French Academy, he set up the Royal printing press, but he was by no means an advocate of a widespread education. A knowledge of letters "ought not to be taught without distinction to everybody" for the quaint reason that "as a Body having Eyes in all its Parts would be monstrous; a State would be the same, if all the Inhabitants thereof were Learned; we should find as little Obedience in it, as Pride

and Presumption would be common." Furthermore, it is declared that the spread of knowledge "would absolutely banish Trade, which enriches Nations; would ruine Husbandry, the true Mother of the People; and would soon destroy the Nursery of Souldiers, which encreases more in the Rudeness of Ignorance than in the Politeness of Sciences: Finally, it would fill France with Litigious Persons, more proper to ruine private Families, and to disturb publick Peace, than to do the State any good." We have happily travelled far from that mediævalism. There is an amusing *naïveté* about the reference to the flourishing of the military in the rudeness of ignorance, though fighting was, of course, an all-important factor in Richelieu's conception of French Imperialism. Continuing this theme, he further says to his Monarch: "It is most certain that the Nobility which does not serve you in the War is not only useless but a burthen to the State . . . and I make no scruple of saying that those who, degenerating from the Vertues of their Forefathers, do not serve the Crown with their Swords and Lives with all the Constancy and Courage which the Laws of the State require, deserve to be deprived

of the Advantages of their Birth, and to be reduced to bear part of the Burthen of the People." A truer concept is this of the duties of Imperialism than is that which recently awarded a huge sum to a noble General for a job which he only verbally completed, and which at the same time neglected to pay the wages of its soldiery.

Quite a modern note is struck where Richelieu reasons against the sale of commissions in the Army, and where he urges the King to use every means in his power for the abolishment of duelling. He advocates the continuance of the sale of judicial appointments on the grounds that you must go slowly in the matter of reform, for "There are Abuses which must be tolerated, for fear of falling into Inconveniences of worse Consequence: Time and Occasion will open the Eyes of those who will succeed in other Ages, to perform that usefully, which we dare not undertake in this, without exposing the State imprudently to a great deal of danger." He provided our War Office of to-day with an appropriate apology for its own manifold shortcomings when he wrote: "It is necessary to wink at the Imperfections of a Body which, having several Heads, cannot have the same

Mind; and which, being influenc'd by as many different Motions as it is compos'd of different Subjects, cannot sometimes be inclin'd to discover, or to suffer its own Good." Richelieu spoke for his age when he wrote: "All Politicians agree that when the People are too easie it is impossible to keep them within the Bounds of their Duty." Yet on the very next page he penned a passage which might be wrested today to the support of a sliding scale Income Tax: "Moreover, as when a Man is wounded, the Heart, which grows faint by the loss of the Blood which flows from it, does not draw that of the lower Parts to its assistance, until the greatest part of that which lies in the uppermost is exhausted; so in the urgent Necessities of States, Soveraigns must, as much as in them lies, make use of the abundance of the Rich before they bleed the Poor extraordinarily." It is curious to find "bleed" used in this sense a couple of centuries ago. A Conservative House of Commons would seemingly have delighted the heart of our unprincipled Cardinal, for he declares that in the choice of Councillors the first of two things which ought particularly to be considered is "That the greatest Wits

are more dangerous than useful in the Management of Affairs; unless they have a great deal more Lead than Quicksilver, they are no ways fit for the State."

In the Second Part of the "Testament" Richelieu deals with many practical matters. He discusses the state of French finances, how and how much money can be raised, and how it should be spent; the nature of French imports and exports to and from Mediterranean ports; how the Army should be organised, and how the Navy should be brought to such a state as should lower the pride of Spain, and, above all, that of England. Britain's claim to be Mistress of the Seas was evidently a sore point with his Eminence, for he tells with indignation that the British "insolence in the late King your Father's time towards the Duke of Scily obliges us to put ourselves in a posture never to suffer the like again. That Duke, being chosen by Henry the Great for an extraordinary Embassy into England, Embarking at Callis in a French Ship with the French Flag on the Main Top Mast, was no sooner in the Channel, but meeting a Yacht which came to receive him, the Commander of it Commanded

the French Ship to strike. The Duke, thinking his Quality would secure him from such an affront, refus'd it boldly; but his refusal being answer'd with three Cannon shot, with Bullets, which piercing his Ship, pierc'd the Heart of the French; Force constrain'd him to do what Reason ought to have secur'd him from, and whatever Complaints he could make, he could get no other reason from the English Captain than that as his Duty oblig'd him to honour his Quality of Ambassador, it oblig'd him also to compel others to pay that respect to his Master's Flag which was due to the Soveraign of the Sea." "Forty good men-of-war," "thirty gallies," and "ten galleons, true Citadels of the sea," were to suffice to dispute this matter of maritime sovereignty. On the subject of trade, too, the Cardinal exhorts France to look to it that she rivals England and Holland in the markets of the world; after discussing what is to be done in Europe and the East, he turns his attention somewhat scornfully to the West: "As to the West, there is no great Trade to be expected there. Drake, Thomas Cavendish, Sperberg, L'Hermite, le Maire, and the late Count Maurice,

who sent twelve Ships thither of 500 Tuns, on purpose to Trade there, either by way of Friendship, or by Force, not having been able to make any settlements there; there is but little to be hop'd for on that side, unless a Military Force be sent thither to take possession of the places Spain possesses there at present." A cool suggestion this, but an Imperialistic.

The world of to-day differs greatly from the world of two centuries and a half ago, and now neither kings nor commoners could perhaps extract much useful advice from the Cardinal's "Testament." The relations of rulers and ruled have been vastly modified in that time, and, as the historians tell us, the French Revolution had considerable effect in this direction, and the Revolution was in a measure the outcome of the conditions which naturally developed from the France which Richelieu "made." Quaintly interesting on the whole, the book tends to soften the harshness of the mental portrait which one has of the man who wrought so ably and so unscrupulously for the aggrandisement of his King. The title of the volume seems to promise more than its pages fulfil, but that is perhaps partly the fault of

the reader. Finance and commerce, relative strengths of armies and navies, frontiers and foreign relations, such were the matters of public import then, and such are made to loom large as matters of public import now. Finally, it may be said that Richelieu was a stern critic of his own nation, for he declared the French unfitted for colonisation, for sustained warfare, or for trade to distant parts, by reason of their "Levity and Laziness," their desire to be through with any enterprise as soon as it was begun. Alone, he declares, the French could never undertake successful war: "they are not afraid of Peril, but they will expose themselves to it without any Pains: the least delays are insupportable to them, they have no Flegm to tarry one moment for their happiness, and they are tir'd even with the continuation of their Prosperities."

THE MORALIST AT THE BREAKFAST TABLE

LATELY I chanced upon a copy of the resuscitated *Rambler*, in which Affectation roars as gently as any sucking dove through the heavy mask of Samuel Johnson. The ghostly voice is little likely to carry far in these changed days, being drowned by the whirr and whizz (and worse) of the automobiles which pulsate like bad dreams through our daily life. (Autolycus is not conservative in this matter of vehicular traffic, but his study neighbours all too nearly a highway sufficiently far from town to allow the motorist a liberal interpretation of the law in the matter of speed.) Who would listen to the attenuated echo of a voice from a phonograph while he can hear the full volume of the original? Surely it were better (to change the simile) for Mr Herbert Vivian, his aiders and abettors, to look at this twentieth century

through such eyes as they may be possessed of than for them to be peering at it through the inadequate spectacles of a hundred and fifty years ago. Still I am not ungrateful to those responsible for this supererogatory performance at the shrine of eighteenth-century letters, for, putting down this red-covered throw-back to a remote ancestor, I turned to my shelves for the genuine *Rambler*—the veritable product of Johnsonian intellect when the Great Lexicographer so worshipped at Miss Pinkerton's polite academy was yet ponderously in the flesh. A long line of calf-bound duodecimos reminded me of the strange manner in which they came hither, for many and various are the ways by which the book-lover comes into his own. Other things are magnetic besides iron; the man of wealth is the man who is oftenest the recipient of a legacy, and the man whose instinct it is to accumulate books finds Circumstance ever ready to aid him in that emprise. Thus it is with an Autolycus, for not only do his shelves grow ever more crowded from the snapping-up of unconsidered trifles from the stall, and from the ready gifts of fellow-bookmen, but occasionally his treasures come from

more unaccustomed sources; and thus it was that Alexander Chalmers's forty-odd volumed edition of the "British Essayists" came recently into my possession. I had become resident in a new neighbourhood, and in the due course of time a tax-collector called. Mr Tax-Collector expressed some interest in the volumes on Mr Autolycus's walls, and offered to add to them "a few old books lying about at home." These duly came, and included the works of Samuel Johnson in a dozen sturdy volumes, and the forty-five volume set (minus one volume) of the "British Essayists," from Steele's *Tatler* of 1709 to the *Looker-on* of 1793. A noble haul this, assuredly.

Putting aside, then, the masquerading *Rambler* — as like the real thing as a frequenter of Covent Garden's fancy-dress balls might make himself to Dr Johnson— it was pleasant to look over the serried ranks of the tax-gatherer's gift, to pick out the volumes of the *Rambler* and the *Idler*, and to turn over their pages, lingering on the sounding sentences of the real Simon Pure, to go back to the familiar *Guardian* and *Spectator*, which set the fashion in

these matters, and helped to make immortal Richard Steele and Joseph Addison. Pleasant is it, too, to follow that fashion through all its various manifestations at the hands of Samuel Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith (whose "Bee" is strangely omitted from Chalmers's collection), Richard Cumberland, Henry Mackenzie, George Colman, and other writers who elected to play the part of pleasant moralisers at the breakfast-tables of our grandparents of the eighteenth century. Once or twice a week, or oftener — the *Spectator* was issued daily — these week-day preachers, to use Thackeray's memorable phrase, laid their brief sheets of fact and fancy, philosophising and moralising, before their patrons, and won for themselves imperishable fame. The fashion passed with the century which gave it birth, but it left us a rich addition to our literature. The paper devoted to life and manners has long since been wedded to the news-sheet, and together they have grown to the mighty size of our daily journals, from each of which volumes of essays might yearly be compiled almost as notable as these delightful works of the old essayists. The motto of Steele's

Tatler might be at the head of each newspaper of to-day:

> "Whate'er men do, or say, or think, or dream,
> Our motley paper seizes for its theme."

The method of writing seems to have been peculiarly suited to the literary genius of the eighteenth century, and apparently to the taste of the reading public, for some of these periodical essays enjoyed a well-deserved popularity at the time of their original publication, and for over a century a close study of the *Spectator* was regarded as a necessary step towards the acquisition of a literary style. There is, indeed, an inexhaustible fund of delight and instruction in these breakfast-table moralists; the index volume alone is a source of much true pleasure, even though it may be regarded as one of those books which are no books; turn up any subject almost, and we shall find our moralists had something to say on the theme. The reading of one of these essays may be heartily commended as a morning exercise; the slipping of one of the volumes into the portmanteau of the holiday maker may be productive of much more delight

than a pile of rubbish gathered from a railway bookstall; for those who read in bed—and I have sinned much in this respect—the keeping of one of the volumes at the bedside may be suggested, not as Sydney Smith recommended his sermons, by way of a soporific, but as a pleasant and fruitful mental exercise.

Select where we may a volume from this row of duodecimos, and turn its pages at random as we will, we shall never fail to be entertained or edified. They knew men and manners, these eighteenth-century writers, and they knew, further, the art of writing of them interestingly and with that easy grace of diction, those long flowing periods which have given place to the short choppy sentences of the present, when two of the most potent masters of the literary class are the electric telegraph and the ha'penny post-card. Here are a dozen sets of the periodical essayists, all of them named in accordance with the same convention—the *Tatler*, *Spectator*, *Guardian*, *Rambler*, *Adventurer*, *World*, *Connoisseur*, *Idler*, *Mirror*, *Lounger*, *Observer*, *Looker-on*, — and herein is to be found the work not only of Steele, Addison, Johnson and the other prin-

cipals of the ventures, but also work of Swift, Pope, Berkeley, Horace Walpole, Chesterfield, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Henry Mackenzie ("The Man of Feeling"), George Colman and other writers, such as Budgell and Tickell, who are chiefly remembered because of their connection with these periodicals. Taking a volume from each of these sets, and opening more or less at random—say where the time-stained ribbon-markers remain—we shall find a pleasant miscellany. The *Tatler* is marked at No. 11, where is to be read the humorous genealogy of the Bickerstaff family written by "Mr Twisden, who died at the battle of Mons, and has a monument in Westminster Abbey, suitable to the respect which is due to his wit and his valour." The *Spectator* is marked at that essay in which Addison gives with sly satire his Catalogue of a Lady's Library—a catalogue which is made to include "'Locke on Human Understanding,' with a paper of patches in it; 'Clelia,' which opened of itself in the place that describes two lovers in a bower; all the Classic Authors, in wood; and a set of Elzevirs, by the same hand." Taking the *Guardian* next, I open on a

paper by Eustace Budgell, a relative of Addison's by the way, in which the first few lines were a reproach to the readers of the day, "the prevailing humour of crying up authors that have writ in the days of our forefathers, and of passing slightly over the merit of our contemporaries, is a grievance that men of a free and unprejudiced thought have complained of through all ages in their writings." ("Hang the age," exclaimed Elia, "I'll write for antiquity.") Surely the days of "log-rollers" and "boomsters" have removed the reproach. The author of this essay is chiefly remembered for his rhythmic defence of his own suicide:

> "What Cato did and Addison admired
> Can not be wrong."

The *Rambler* (before Mr Vivian had usurped a partnership) falls open where the neglected ribbon has broken at Johnson's fanciful discussion, by way of allegory, of the family jars between Wit and Learning, in which we may read something of a noble apologia on behalf of the essayists who are engaging our attention: "Learning was borne

up by the vigour of Wit, and Wit guided by the perspicacity of Learning. . . . Wit persuaded Learning to converse with the Graces, and Learning engaged Wit in the service of the Virtues." In the *Adventurer* I open on one of Johnson's few contributions, where he expatiates on the blessedness of sleep and incidentally arouses my curiosity by a further reference to the "Clelia" which Addison found in a lady's library. On what happy bookstall shall I snap up this novel of a bygone generation?

Each volume taken down provides temptation for the reader to go on exploring its pages. An essay might be written on each of the essayists. In these days of the multiplication of handy re-issues of the best of old books, surely some publisher with speculation in his eye might do worse than give us a new set of "The British Essayists." A costly undertaking? True, but have we not also nowadays the payment by instalment system? We may say of the whole corpus what Steele said of his *Tatler*—"the general purpose has been to recommend truth, innocence, honour, and virtue as the chief ornaments of life."

IN RE RASSELAS AND ANOTHER

A CURIOUS coincidence in the history of letters is the publishing almost simultaneously in the spring of 1759 of "Rasselas" and "Candide." The coincidence is, indeed, only the more curious the more closely we inquire into it. Johnson and Voltaire at the time dominated, each in his own capital, the literary hierarchy of his day, and each sat down, at the same time apparently, and wrote a tale on the same theme, with something of the same spirit informing them both. Each tale is, indeed, an examination of the philosophy of stagnation, the philosophy which declares that all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds—to use a phrase which one of them has immortalised. Each, too, employs something of the same "machinery," each is named after its hero, and each hero wanders about the world in search of the secret of human felicity. The coinci-

dence is, indeed, maintained to the present, for it may safely be said that the majority of readers who know anything of the work of Johnson (apart from the Boswell-revealed Doctor) and Voltaire know but "Rasselas" and "Candide." Indeed, if I mistake not, one popular purveyor of literary excellences for the multitude issued the two together as though they were parts of one whole. Certainly, if sustained popularity is to be judged by multiplicity of editions—and in the long run there is no better way of judging—then each of the works named is that by which its author is best known to the English readers of to-day. It is true that those of us who delight in haunting old bookstalls may occasionally find a set of Voltaire's works, in some ninety volumes, calf-bound, offered at a price which represents but a few pence per volume; but of works which we find exposed for sale in issues lately from the press he is represented but by "Candide," of which, at least, three English versions have been published during the past decade or so. The same applies to Samuel Johnson. His collected works may not total close on a century of volumes, like those of his unresting French contemporary

("Have we not all eternity to rest in?" was Voltaire's famous remark to Diderot), but still his writings have lapsed from use. His Dictionary (in "improved" form) may still be with us, and his "Lives of the Poets" may still claim the attention of the studious, but of all the rest of his output, his short story of "Rasselas" is the only scrap which goes on exercising the printing-press.

It is not my intention here to follow out closely the different manners in which the two giants of letters wrote on the theme of human happiness; suffice it that each wrote in truly characteristic fashion, and that while Voltaire penned his savage satire with searing wit and a sardonic power almost demoniac, Johnson, with the less assured pen of the moralist, wrote a quieter though, as it seems to some readers, a more disquieting tale. Voltaire was pouring the vials of his satiric scorn—vitriol almost unequalled in literature—on a certain school of philosophy, was ridiculing the pestilent smugness of the Leibnizian "all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds." Johnson, on the other hand, had taken a larger field, and was discussing the scope of human happiness

as a whole. Voltaire's work is irradiated with wit, and delights us at once with the severity and the sureness of its satire; while Johnson's, which has but little in it of wit or humour, appears rather to be a cleverly presented case on behalf of pessimism. In reading "Rasselas," it is easy to remember that its author was fifty when he wrote it; in reading "Candide," it is difficult to believe that its author could have been sixty-five when it was written. By our somewhat prudish insularity, "Candide," as Voltaire wrote it, has ever been voted overstrong, and so it is that we have had to depend for the most part upon shamefaced English editions of it. The like objection cannot be made by the most squeamish against "Rasselas," and the consequence is that we have had several popular re-issues of it, even within the time of book-buyers who still reckon themselves as young.

These two stories are, indeed, worthy of note as being the twin source of that fiction with a purpose which has grown to so mighty a flood in our day. They would be interesting, historically, for this alone, but they owe their sustained vogue to the fact that they appeal to

the same ever-active, never-sated human desire for knowledge as to the wherefores of our existence, for some explanation of the misery which is in the world, for some clue to the discovery of unalloyed happiness. For true literary enjoyment in the reading there is, I think, no comparison between the two philosophical novelettes in question. Packed as "Rasselas" is with thought, it has not the variety and wit of its rival; the Prince from the Happy Valley is by no means as attractive an individual as the *naïve* Candide; the princess his sister, with all her acute philosophising, is not entertaining as the unfortunate Cunégonde, while Imlac is dull, positively dull, beside the immortal Doctor Pangloss. If it were possible to consider "Rasselas" by itself, it would probably appear a greater work than it does to a reader familiar also with its French rival. Our insular prejudice resents what we choose to consider the grossness of Voltaire's tale, and therefore, probably, Johnson's story knows no rival for the majority of his fellow-countrymen and women (though it was a woman, by the way, who described "Candide" as the very wittiest book in the world).

In its ending "Rasselas" is less happy than "Candide"—for Johnson gives us a "conclusion in which nothing is concluded," after all the inquiries and speculations of his characters; while Voltaire, on the other hand, after taking Candide and his companions through the most terrible of experiences, closes with the masterly moral, conveyed in a couple of lines:

"'Cela est bien dit,' répondit Candide, 'mais il faut cultiver nôtre jardin.'"

DELLA CRUSCA AND CO. (LIMITED)

It is a century since Della Crusca, Anna Matilda, Laura Maria, Benedict, and other dealers in the "true sublime" were given the *coup de grâce* in Gifford's satires. The minor poet of yesterday is the laughing-stock of to-day, and to-day these are but names. Even as names they are but infrequently met with, unless by the student of late eighteenth-century literature, and the readers of the satires of the early part of the nineteenth. In 1809 Lord Byron could write:

> "Though Crusca's bards no more our journals fill,
> Some stragglers skirmish round their columns still;
> Last of the howling host which once was Bell's,
> Matilda snivels yet, and Hafiz yells;
> And Merry's metaphors appear anew,
> Chained to the signature of O.P.Q."

Chancing one day upon an Oxford Street bookstall, piled higgledy-piggledy with varied volumes at a penny apiece, I found after

five minutes' turning over of books that are no books the first volume of "The British Album" in which, in 1790, "Mr J. Bell, of the British Library," gave, as he thought, material immortality to his "howling host." Della Crusca and Anna Matilda were familiar names, but their work was unknown and was to be acquired for one penny! Could there be hesitation? Handling the book, one's mind goes back to the distant days when Della Crusca and his satellites scintillated in the *World* of the seventeen-eighties, to the days when Della Crusca — in his own person as Mr Robert Merry—was one of a body of log-rollers in Florence who produced such periodicals as the *Arno* and the *Florence Miscellany* "to divert themselves and say kind things of each other"; and one thinks of the talented playwright, Mrs Hannah Cowley, whose "Belle's Stratagem" proved her capable of better things, carrying on her amatory duel with an unknown swain in the pages of a newspaper.

Blown back to England from Florence in 1787 by the breath of scandal, Robert Merry sat him down on June 29 and wrote the "Adieu and Recall to Love," and signed it, in his only

moment of inspiration, Della Crusca. It duly appeared—editors were then more kind than critical — in the pages of the *World*, and in those days there may have been something of the "true sublime" in associating as the poet did his "devious steps" with "the mountains' morning dews"! Della Crusca was by this poem a made man in the eyes of one lady, who, to use her own words, "read the beautiful lines, and, without rising from the table at which she was sitting, answered them." This lady was Mrs Hannah Cowley, who in an impassioned strain addressed the pseudonymous bard, saying—

> "O! seize again thy golden quill,
> And with its point my bosom thrill,"

with more to the same effect. From that moment the *World* was in for it, and the publisher thereof posed before his generation as a new Apollo. Della Crusca hails Anna Matilda as the tenth Muse — forgetting that Mistress Anne Bradstreet had usurped that title in America nearly a century and a half earlier. Anna Matilda replies by confessing that she is merely human, and more than hints at being

no longer young, although she adds for her poet's consolation (and the italics are her own):

"My *blooming soul* is yet in youth."

When she goes on to speak of "the chisel's feath'ry touch" she becomes incomprehensible to twentieth-century readers, and it is well to turn over the page to Della Crusca's succeeding contribution to the wordy warfare. He begins in the surprise of capitals and italics at finding that she, too, is

"OFFSPRING *of frail mortality*";

and then declares that for the unknown fair

"Eager I'd traverse Lybia's plain,
The tawny Lion's dread domain,
To meet thee there: nor flagging *Fear*
Should ever on my cheek appear;
For e'en the Forest King obeys
Majestic WOMAN'S *potent gaze.*"

Pausing in his exchange of nonsense verses with Anna Matilda, Della Crusca penned an excuse for Werter's suicide, who

"To himself a prey,
The heart's excessive workings could not bear";

and so "sought his native heaven the nearest way." For awhile he and his unknown Anna Matilda rested on their laurels, but in an unhappy—and, needless to say, uninspired—moment he bethought him of rivalling Gray with "An Elegy, Written on the Plain of Fontenoy," which must have made the poet turn in his grave in the country churchyard where he had lain for sixteen years:—

"Chill blows the blast, and Twilight's dewy hand
Draws in the West her dusky veil away;
A deeper shadow steals along the land,
And Nature muses at the death of Day!

Near this bleak Waste no friendly mansion rears
Its walls, where Mirth, and social joys resound,
But each dim object melts the soul to tears,
While Horror treads the scatter'd bones around.

And thus alone and comfortless I roam,
Wet with the drizzling show'r; I sigh sincere,
I cast a fond look tow'rds my native home,
And think what valiant Britons perish'd here.

Yes, the time was, nor very far the date,
When Carnage here her crimson toil began;
When Nations' Standards wav'd in threat'ning state,
And Man the murd'rer met the murd'rer Man."

By this the reader begins to wish he had also

met Mr Robert Merry, *alias* Della Crusca. The "Elegy" duly appeared in the *World*, and Anna Matilda was once more given her opportunity. She sat down in a fine frenzy and wrote further "Stanzas to Della Crusca," which appeared with an editorial note that they had been "received forty hours after the publication of the Elegy." One imagines the worthy "Mr J. Bell, of the British Library," holding up his hands in astonishment at the rapidity of his correspondent; "a genuine impromptu, ladies and gentlemen, a genuine impromptu. I received it but forty hours after Mr Merry's 'Elegy' was published!" The lady begins:

"Hush'd be each ruder note!—Soft silence spread,
With ermine hand, thy cobweb robe around;
Attention pillow my reclining head,
Whilst eagerly I catch the golden sound."

She then goes on to declare that she had recently returned to London from the country, and was sufficiently rewarded for the change by the "Elegy":—

"Obscuring smoak and air impure I greet,
With the coarse din that Trade and Folly form,
For here the Muse's Son again I meet—
I catch *his* notes amidst the vulgar storm."

Not to be outdone, Della Crusca tells how "the soft cadence" of her "warbled sigh" reached him as

"On the sea-shore with folded arms I stood,
The Sun, just sinking, shot a level ray,
Luxuriant crimson glow'd upon the flood,
And the curl'd surf was ting'd with golden spray."

Next comes a remonstrance from Anna Matilda, who refuses to believe that Della Crusca can have "known Love's enchanting pain, its hopes, its woes, *and yet complain*"; if this indeed be so, she says:—

"The Muses hence disown thy rebel lay—
But thou in *Aldermanic* gown their scorn repay;
Crimson'd and furr'd, the highest honours dare,
And on thy laurels tread—a Plump Lord Mayor!"

which seems hard measure even for Mr Robert Merry.

"Mr J. Bell, of the British Library," who thought these verses were the "true sublime" and sure of immortality, has at least afforded us half-an-hour's amusement. Della Crusca has given us a damnatory adjective, and Anna Matilda stands for all time as type of the

rhyming Miss. It may be added as an historical fact not without interest that Della Crusca and Anna Matilda had corresponded through the columns of the *World* for a couple of years before they met, when she found him a *blasé* young man of four-and-thirty and he found his tenth Muse an engaging young thing of forty-six!

HOW DOTH THE——

It is a shabby little book, and it has been shabbily treated. It was rescued from a zinc bath full of old books. "Nothing any good in it," I was told, though I found besides Goldsmith's works with Hazlitt's bookplates in them; and the zinc bath had been standing out in a suburban garden, so that the poor biblical outcasts were exposed not only to all the winds that blew, but also to all the rains that fell. "Nothing any good in it," forsooth, and here is a little old chapbook kind of edition of what is perhaps truly the most popular book of verses in the language, those "Divine and Moral Songs for Children" which have delighted, and let it be hoped morally influenced, several generations. First published in 1715 as "Divine Songs for Children," and afterwards enlarged to its present scope, the work was hugely popular, and close upon a hundred editions are said to have been exhausted in as

many years. The little copy upon which Autolycus lighted in so strange a fashion was printed at Coventry somewhere about a hundred years ago — its title-page is lacking; and it was probably one of a batch of copies carried about the country places by one of the packmen who were then chiefly responsible for the distribution of cheap literature. To take the eye of his youthful patrons the packman could show a rude engraving heading every song—an engraving in which the ants to which the sluggard is in another place so sternly referred are represented as about the size of well-conditioned mice; where, indeed, relative sizes and the laws of perspective are boldly ignored. Shabby cardboard covers, with its frontispiece forming one end-paper and the last page of the verses the other, the work is one which would stand every chance of being flung aside many times even in the cheapest box (and I know of such the contents of which are offered at two for a penny, with a reduction on taking a quantity).

We are a little inclined, nowadays, when laughing at the Rev. Dr Isaac Watts—or at certain manifestations of his genius as hymno-

logist—to forget his better work, and that certain lines from these "Divine and Moral Songs" have entered as *clichés* (to use the hateful neologism) into our language, "'Tis the voice of the sluggard," "Let dogs delight to bark and bite," "How doth the little busy bee," "Birds in their little nests agree," and half-a-dozen other phrases that form the earliest texts of the domestic moralist, are here. Coming thus upon the whole collection, and conning it over, I have been struck by the quaint mixture of simple moral teaching and abstruse theology, of happy phrasing and awful bathos, of natural verities and eternal possibilities in which Watts indulged. It may be doubted, however, whether any other writer has minted in a book so slight, so many coins current in the exchange of familiar quotations. It is, then—and we have to recall the fact when criticising some of the worthy Doctor's phrasings—close upon two centuries since the little work was first issued. Dr Watts felt it necessary to preface his infant hymnology — then a daring departure in itself—by a few words addressed to those responsible for the education of the young. After touching upon those re-

sponsibilities he declared that "Verse was at first designed for the service of God, though it hath been wretchedly abused since." He then adds four "advantages" of setting his moral teaching in verse for the young, and the chief of these is: "There is a great delight in the very learning of truths and duties this way. There is something so amusing and entertaining in rhymes and metre that will incline children to make this part of their business a diversion. And you may turn their very duty into a reward by giving them the privilege of learning one of these songs every week, if they fulfil the business of the week well, and promising them the book itself when they have learnt ten or twenty songs out of it."

It is to be feared that close study of some of these songs by youthful minds might lead in some cases, to the pride that apes humility. Take, for example, No. IV., with the familiar opening:—

> "Whene'er I take my walks abroad,
> How many poor I see!"

with its insistence upon "my" material superiority to the poor whom I see around.

Song XIII., "On the Danger of Delay," is forceful, but in our modern view scarcely suited to children.

"What if the Lord grow wroth and swear,
While I refuse to read and pray,
That He'll refuse to lend an ear
To all my groans another day!

What if His dreadful anger burn,
While I refuse His offer'd grace;
And all His love to fury turn,
And strike me dead upon the place!

'Tis dangerous to provoke a God;
His pow'r and veng'ance none can tell;
One stroke of His almighty rod
Shall send young sinners quick to Hell."

What bathos there is in the closing lines of that stanza of Song XXIII., "On Disobedience to Parents," which tells what will befall "him that breaks his father's law or mocks his mother's word":—

"What heavy guilt upon him lies,
How cursed is his name;
The ravens shall pick out his eyes
And eagles eat the same."

It is, curiously, the opening verse of each

song which rings most familiarly in the ear. Who does not know the stanzas beginning Songs XVI., XVII., and XX. ?—

"Let dogs delight to bark and bite,
For God hath made them so;
Let bears and lions growl and fight,
For 'tis their nature too."

"Whatever brawls disturb the street,
There should be peace at home;
Where sisters dwell and brothers meet,
Quarrels should never come."

"How doth the little busy bee
Improve each shining hour,
And gather honey all the day
From ev'ry op'ning flow'r!"

After these Divine Songs, the hymnologist modestly puts forward "A Slight Specimen of Moral Songs, such as I wish some happy and condescending genius would undertake for the use of children, and perform much better. The sense and subjects might be borrowed plentifully from the Proverbs of Solomon, from all the common appearances of Nature, from all the occurrences in civil life, both in city and country (which also would afford matter for other Divine Songs). Here the language and

measures should be easy, and flowing with cheerfulness, with or without the solemnities of religion, or the sacred names of God and holy things, that children might find delight and profit together. This would be one effectual way to deliver them from the temptation of loving or learning those idle, wanton, or profane songs which give so early an ill taint to the fancy and memory, and become the seeds of future vices." The Slight Specimen consists of eight songs, most of which are familiar to most readers: "'Tis the voice of the sluggard," "Abroad in the meadows to see the young lambs," "How fair is the rose, what a beautiful flower," "These emmets how little they are in our eyes!" "Hush, my dear, lie still and slumber," etc. One or two of the pieces are new to one reader, though many of those already mentioned belong to his earliest memories, as they probably do to the earliest memories of most of his readers. New to him is the song on "Good Resolutions," with its delicious verse—

"When I hear them telling lies,
Talking foolish, cursing, swearing,
First, I'll try to make them wise,
Or I'll soon go out of hearing."

Discretion is, assuredly, the better part of virtue.

The collection closes with a piece classified as neither Divine nor Moral, nor is it the work of Isaac Watts. This is "The Beggar's Petition," which was written by the Rev. Thomas Moss, who must have had Gray's "Elegy" ringing in his ears when he wrote it. Witness this stanza :—

> "My tender wife, sweet soother of my care,
> Struck with sad anguish at the stern decree,
> Fell, ling'ring fell, a victim to despair,
> And left the world to wretchedness and me."

A PENN'ORTH OF COBBETT

To the snapper-up of unconsidered trifles from the boxes and stalls on which are exposed for sale those volumes that are at length brought to this low estate, there are moments when for the price of a newspaper he is able to make his own the most varied and sometimes the most remarkable of works, though the days of the first edition of Fitz-Gerald's "Rubaiyat" at a penny have long since gone. In these collections of low-priced waifs we have sometimes to turn over a-many piles of rubbish before coming upon a snap-upable trifle—from our point of view — for what is one man's rubbish is another man's treasure, as I had occasion some time since to learn when standing in that narrow, dirty old court, transmogrified of late, leading from Clare Market to the Strand. I had been looking over the rain-speckled backs of some three-volume

novels, not for a moment dreaming of purchase, but merely waiting with what patience I might while another haunter of the stalls made up his mind over the various items in a box labelled "One penny each, or three for twopence." I was, in truth, itching with impatience, for while seeing the man pick up the pamphlets and booklets, glance at them and throw them aside, my eye caught the words "William Cobbett." I could have snatched the pamphlet from his hands for fear that he might want to buy it, but he wasted (from his point of view) only the briefest glance thereon and cast it aside, finally picking up the one thing which he had elected to buy, a booklet on vegetarianism. No wonder he scorned anything bearing the name of beef-worshipping Cobbett. He passed on. At once I began rummaging the box, and having, incidentally, picked up a copy of the second edition of the pamphlet in which Alexander Pope gave to the world his "Essay on Criticism," searched among the political and theological tracts and operatic "books of the words" and at length lighted upon the treasure of which I had had but the barest glimpse.

It proved to be "The Life of William Cobbett, Author of the 'Political Register.' Written by Himself," and published in 1816 by worthy William Hone, the friend of Charles Lamb, and author of the "Year Book" and other miscellanies which yet continue to have a certain vogue.

It did not need a second glance to show that I had some true treasure-trove. The published price of this unconventional autobiography was 4d., "or eighty copies for £1," while a line on the top of the title-page informed the readers of 1816 that it is a "third edition, containing as much as a half-crown pamphlet"—a truly Cobbettian touch. A veritable acquisition this for a penny! Paying my twopence for these works of the poet and politician—a queer couple, but hard hitters both—I bore them off in triumph, assuredly among the cheapest of my finds.

Familiar with the Cobbett of the "Political Register," "The Rural Rides," the "Cottage Economy," the "Advice to Young Men, and (Incidentally) to Young Women," I had gathered from earlier perusal of his work sufficient knowledge of the frank egotism of the man to know

that his autobiography would afford good reading; nor was I disappointed. The Surrey hero —for hero assuredly William Cobbett was— sets forth the story of his career from the days of his early home life on his father's farm. With something of the pride that apes humility he labours the point that he cannot claim illustrious descent. He cannot trace beyond his grandfather, and *he* was a day-labourer on a farm. "How much better it is thus to tell the naked truth than to descend to such miserable shifts as Dr Franklin has had recourse to, in order to persuade people that his forefathers were men of wealth and consideration! . . . According to Dr Johnson, a *Franklin* was what we now call a *gentleman's steward, or land bailiff*—a personage one degree above a bum-bailiff, and that's all." We then have the familiar story of the youthful farm "hand" setting out with his small savings to attend a neighbouring fair, and suddenly resolving to board the London coach, and seek his fortune at the hands of the stony-hearted stepmother, the Metropolis: "It was on the 6th of May 1783, that I, like Don Quixote, sallied forth to seek adventures. I was dressed in my

holiday clothes, in order to accompany two or three lasses to Guildford fair. They were to assemble at a house about three miles from my home, where I was to attend them; but, unfortunately for me, I had to cross the London turnpike road. The stage-coach had just turned the summit of a hill, and was rattling down towards me at a merry rate. The notion of going to London never entered my mind till this very moment, yet the step was completely determined on before the coach came to the spot where I stood. Up I got, and was in London about nine o'clock in the evening."

A fellow-traveller of the seventeen-year-old truant sought to induce him to return, but without avail, and then set about finding work for him, which he finally did in the office of an attorney friend. The position of "an understrapping quill driver" was scarcely suited to William Cobbett, and a few months of it drove him to take the King's shilling, and to write of his escape from the law in these emphatic terms: "No part of my life has been totally unattended with pleasure, except the eight or nine months I passed in Gray's Inn. The office (for so the dungeon where I wrote was called)

was so dark that on cloudy days we were obliged to burn candle. I worked like a galley-slave from five in the morning till eight or nine at night, and sometimes all night long. How many quarrels have I assisted to foment and perpetuate between those poor innocent fellows John Doe and Richard Roe! How many times (God forgive me) have I set them to assault each other with guns, swords, staves, and pitchforks, and then brought them to answer for their misdeeds before our Sovereign Lord the King, seated in his court of Westminster! When I think of the saids and soforths, and the counts of tautology that I scribbled over; when I think of those sheets of seventy-two words, and those lines two inches apart, my brain turns. Gracious heaven! if I am doomed to be wretched, bury me beneath Iceland snows, and let me feed on blubber; stretch me under the burning Line, and deny me thy propitious dews; nay, if it be thy will, suffocate me with the infected and pestilential air of a democratic club-room; but save me from the desk of an attorney!" Assuredly Cobbett was a hater after the heart of Dr Johnson.

For a second time, then, he ran away, and this time he 'listed and got sent with his regiment to the North American colonies, where he served nearly eight years, and where, as he tells us in another book, he first saw, and resolved upon marrying, his future wife, then busily engaged at an early hour on a frosty morning cleaning the stones in front of her home.

The tone of this energetic autobiography in brief, with its attacks on democracy, is curious. The little work would appear to have been written while Cobbett was in America in 1797, and is probably an English version of "The Life and Adventures of Peter Porcupine," published in Philadelphia in 1798. It would seem to have been written in reply to "abominable lies" written of him by the democrats of the new Republic. "The same infamous faction have asserted that I got my living in London by garret-scribbling." As pamphleteer in America he was accused of being in the pay of the British Government, and he repudiates the suggestion with characteristic energy, and proceeds to show how much his writings have brought him in, "for the pecuniary concerns

of an author are always the most interesting." The "Life" breaks off some eighteen years before its date of issue, and its author lived a further nineteen years, so that it is but a sketch of his earlier career and a brief revealer of his character and of his style as one of the most vigorous of English political writers. It is, indeed, a capital penn'orth of Cobbett, and "the rest of the Acts and Life of the Author, are they not written in the volumes of his 'Political Register' and other works?"

"S. T. C." ON CRITICISM

THERE are times when an Autolycus, jingling in his pocket the few coppers or slight disc of silver which he could afford to pass away for biblical treasures, has wished that he could write himself down a millionaire. Not with any desire of making a wilderness and calling it a deer-forest, not with any wish to compete for international sporting trophies, and not with the design of dazzling the eyes of the less-moneyed with the hideousness of Ostentation—not for any of these reasons, but that he might be able to acquire such rarities in books as are without the reach of others, does such at times envy the millionaire his terrible power of the purse. There are, however, compensations even in impecuniosity, for there are times when the impecunious one gets something of the fearful pleasure of paying more for some desired volume than—judged by the world's narrow standards —he can afford. Such a pleasure was mine,

when, guided by a catalogue of second-hand books, I went to a rich storehouse in the new Booksellers' Row, and acquired a first edition, in two handsome calf-bound volumes, of the "Biographia Literaria; or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions," by S. T. Coleridge, Esq., published, after troublous complications, by Mr Rest Fenner, of Paternoster Row, in 1817.

Suffice it that Autolycus had to pay more than his accustomed few pence for this treasure trove—how much more he has refrained from saying, lest Mrs Autolycus, looking over his shoulder, remind him of the uses to which such sums should more legitimately be put. What are a few shillings more or less to treasure such as this? Here is the most unconventional of autobiographies—if, indeed, it can be termed such—in its original form. The bookplates show that the volumes at one time belonged to William Lorance Rogers, a worthy magistrate of London, who outlived Coleridge by but a few years, and that they may have belonged to that magistrate's long-popular son, the late learned and philanthropic Prebendary Rogers. These are but interesting incidents

in the life-story of the volumes, which have, however, another feature about them which makes them irresistible to their latest possessor, for on the closing fly-leaves is copied in a contemporary hand a letter written by Coleridge from his death-bed, a letter which we may take as his dying confession of faith. It was written when the poet was at Highgate, and on July 13, 1834, when he was within twelve days of his death, and with full consciousness of his approaching end. This letter having been copied, as has been said, by a contemporary hand, seems to take us nearer to the poet therefore. Hopes that it might be a newly-discovered scrap of Coleridgeana were not long-lived, for its value as a confession of faith on the part of the poet has before been recognised, and it has been printed in full at the close of some editions of the "Table Talk." The godchild to whom it was addressed was evidently then of tender years, and the story of his name is apparently that of abundant promise cut off by early death, for, says Coleridge: "You received from Christ's minister at the Baptismal Font as your Christian name, the name of a most dear friend of your father's,

and who was to me even as a son, the late Adam Steinmetz, whose fervent aspiration and ever paramount aim, even from early youth, was to be a Christian in thought, word, and deed, in will, mind, and affections." Of this same Steinmetz we have brief mention in the "Table Talk," under date two years earlier than that of the letter: "Poor dear Steinmetz is gone, his state of sure blessedness accelerated; or, it may be, he is buried in Christ, and there in that mysterious depth grows on to the spirit of a just man made perfect. Could I for a moment doubt this, the grass would become black beneath my feet, and this earthly frame a charnel-house. I never knew any man so illustrate the difference between the feminine and the effeminate." It would be an interesting pursuit to seek to recover what may be from the black abysm of time of this admired friend of a great poet.

One other written addition to these volumes claims attention before we turn to the work itself or to some of its many attractive features. This is a passage pencilled in from Medwin's "Conversations with Lord Byron," in which that poet describes himself as much "amused"

by Coleridge's memoirs, and adds that "Coleridge is like Sosia in 'Amphytrion'—he does not know whether he is himself or not. If he had never gone to Germany, nor spoilt his fine genius by the transcendental philosophy and German metaphysics, nor taken to write Lay Sermons, he would have made the greatest poet of the day. He might have been anything; as it is, he is a thing 'that dreams are made of.'" There is certainly something to be said for Byron's view, but we have to take our Coleridge, not as he might have been, but as he was and is, and much of what he was and is is revealed in these two volumes of the "Biographia Literaria." This work had to wait for thirty years before it passed into a second edition—it is often thus with classics—but since that second was given us by Coleridge's daughter and son-in-law there have been several re-issues, and it has taken an acknowledged place as one of the finest of Coleridge's prose works. It has been said by some critics that great as he is as poet he is greater as critic, though some, on the other hand, would give all his prose for the sheaf of poems which he wrote in the single year of 1797, a

sheaf including, be it said, "The Ancient Mariner," the first part of "Christabel," "Kubla Khan," and "This Lime Tree Bower, My Prison." Though I readily count myself among the latter, I yet delight in the vague philosophy, the pregnant criticism, and the delicious autobiographic touches of this strangely impressive "Biographia." The work is, of course, notoriously but little concerned with the incidents of the poet's life, but it is very fully a record of certain of his opinions, and more especially of those opinions as they concerned the great poetical movement, of which he was one of the most important forces; perhaps the most important from the fact of his being, as Dr Garnett has insisted, the poet who, in himself, represented the passing vogue of the eighteenth century and the more truly "inspired" genius of the nineteenth.

It is not surprising to find so much of the work taken up with a statement of the author's views on poetry and criticism when we recall the manner in which a slight volume of his own had just been received. In 1816 had been published a small book containing "Christabel," "Kubla Khan," and "The Pains of Sleep,"

and this is how it was hailed by the wisdom of the *Edinburgh Review*: "Upon the whole we look upon this publication as one of the most notable pieces of impertinence of which the Press has lately been guilty, and one of the boldest experiments that has yet been made upon the patience or understanding of the public. The other productions of the Lake School have generally exhibited talents thrown away upon subjects so mean that no power of genius could ennoble them; or perverted or rendered useless by a false theory of poetical composition, but even in the worst of them, if we except the 'White Doe' of Mr Wordsworth and some of the Laureate's odes, there were always some gleams of feeling or of fancy. But the thing now before us is utterly destitute of value. It exhibits from beginning to end not a ray of genius; and we defy any man to point out a passage of poetical merit in any of the three pieces which it contains." Prodigious, is it not? William Hazlitt and Thomas Moore seem to fight posthumously for the honour of having penned the famous, or infamous, passage. It is easier to believe either of them dishonest than to imagine that they believed what they

were writing to be true. When such were the hard things being said of the men who were the mouthpieces of the national poetical renascence it is not to be wondered that Coleridge should have spoken to all who cared to listen—it is to be feared that in 1817 they were but few—on a matter which he had so much at heart. A large part of the work consists of a defence, or perhaps more properly an apologia for Wordsworth, Southey, and the author himself, and for the famous "Lyrical Ballads." It is impossible for us to-day, even after reading such a passage as that quoted, to fully realise the position of the orthodox critics who belaboured the poetic genius which was manifesting itself in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Scott's romances in verse, and Byron's tales were the seeming standards of excellence —the limits within which the critics would have hobbled Pegasus—but Southey's unconventional work, Wordsworth's simplicity, Coleridge's and Shelley's imagination, Keats's richness—these were things which, according to contemporary criticism, "would not do."

In this "Biographia" Coleridge is largely

concerned with the attitude commonly held towards the most remarkable poets of a remarkably rich poetic era, but there is incidentally much here which the critic of to-day—or of any day, for the matter of that—might study with advantage. Much to make him hesitate before lightly uttering his dogmatic, "this won't do." Here we have the old cry for fixed canons of literary criticism, a cry so very difficult to satisfy, and if it ever were satisfied we should have many works, I am convinced, condemned by the canons, but given immortality by popular taste, or else our canons of criticism would have to "pass" such diverse work as that of Keats and that of Dr Watts. (It has punningly been said in this connection that we have no Canon, we have only a few Maxims.) In one regard Coleridge gives especially pertinent advice to the critic: Seek, he says, that which is good, not that which is bad, in your subject. "Admit that the Allegro and Penseroso of Milton are not without merit; but repay yourself for this concession by reprinting the two poems on the University Carrier. As a fair specimen of his sonnets quote 'a Book was writ of late called Tetrachordon,' and as characteristic of his

rhythm and metre cite his literal translation of the first and second Psalm. In order to justify yourself, you need only assert that had you dwelt chiefly on the beauties and excellences of the poet, the admiration of these might seduce the attention of future writers from the objects of their love and wonder to an imitation of the few poems and passages in which the poet was most unlike himself. . . . He who tells me that there are defects in a new work tells me nothing which I should not have taken for granted without his information. But he who points out and elucidates the beauties of an original work does, indeed, give me interesting information, such as experience would not have authorised me in anticipating." The whole duty of the critic is, of course, not to condemn, but this fact is at times ignored, though perhaps not so badly as it used to be. For its criticism on criticism then this work is alone worthy of study, but it is yet more attractive for the scraps of autobiography it affords, scraps which have been made the most of by Coleridge's biographers. Here we find the original story of the poet's schoolmaster's method, of the inception of the "Lyrical

Ballads," of the peripatetic journey in search of subscribers for the *Watchman*, and of the famous fire which the servant-maid lighted with an extravagant quantity of paper, and justified herself with, "La, sir, why it is only *Watchmen!*"

A LAST "FIND" IN BOOKSELLERS' ROW

"ALL, all are gone, the old familiar faces," sang Elia in one of the most poignantly pathetic pieces of verse in the language. Something of the sadness which engendered that song in the soul of the hero of the East India House fell over me when I chanced, after an unusually long absence, upon Booksellers' Row, in which housebreakers and booksellers were engaged in unequal combat. The battle is to the strong, and the housebreakers were winning all along the row. It was several weeks since I had passed along the familiar thoroughfare, and many changes had taken place, more were being made, and the last change of all was not far off. Gone, hast thou, Mrs H., friend of many a scribe in need, gone have many of those biblical benefactors who for a few pence have helped Autolycus to perennial companionships. Walking along the way so soon to be

but a memory, I wondered if it would be my good fortune to light, among the books still left, upon one which, more than any I already had, should remind me of the place so soon to be no more.

From the inner shelves of many stores the envolumed treasures had been brought and exposed on trestled boards along the shuttered fronts of buildings already given over to the pickaxe and the shovel. Strange was much of the biblical flotsam and jetsam swept out from the recesses of these shops by the rising tide of improvement—flotsam and jetsam soon to be swept away beyond the borders of the Strand; there, S., was thy book of playful comment on matters which were current the day before yesterday; there, too, was the indictment of a nation penned by an anonymous fellowship that together had more courage than a certain statesman; and there, F., was thy gossip on the latest fashion in circular tours—a fashion which would convert the playground of Europe into an arena for trick-cyclists.

Nothing was there here to tempt pence from the pocket. Suddenly a legend over an open

shop-front took the attention, notifying as it did that all books within were to be sold at the same price—one shilling, to wit. A veritable Republic of letters, this! the levelling sign-writer had by a stroke of his pen made all books equal—lesson-books and law-books (which are, perhaps, in a subtle sense but lesson-books after all), works of fiction and finance, travellers' stories and biographers' truths, all brought to one dead level according to the monetary standard; the salesman's Magna Charta placed on an equality, cover by cover, the piffling lines of a living poetaster and the works of Robert Burns, a volume by one Washington Moon and Tooke's "Diversions of Purley." The practised eye of Autolycus glanced over the covers of old and new, but saw little that endangered the security of the few shillings in his purse. He was turning about to leave when, with that instinct, or luck, or happy fortune—call it what you will—which attends him on his bookstall wanderings, he noted among a number of theological volumes the simple words "Hood's Plea." The word "plea" probably suggested religious controversy to the bookseller, and he must have dumped the volume among its

companions without a reference to the title-page. Far other was it with Autolycus. To see the book was to lay hands on it, to hold it was to feel the thrill which comes on securing a prize —whether the prize be one such as this, gained after idle Autolycusising, or whether it be such as come at times to reward the patient disciple of old Izaak. Patiently has D. spent holiday after holiday in pursuit of the salmon, but when he lands his sheeny monster the joy he feels will be no greater than mine as I walked off with my slim, green volume t'other day in Holywell Street.

Scarcely daring to glance at the book as he went, Autolycus passed from Booksellers' Row with a feeling that if he paused the bookseller must repent his bargain, and would come hurrying after to say that a mistake had been made. You, B., will know the feeling.

The volume thus rescued — never was a splendid shilling better spent—was "The Plea of the Midsummer Fairies, Hero and Leander, Lycus the Centaur, and other Poems. By Thomas Hood, author of 'Whims and Oddities,' etc. etc. London: Printed for Longmans, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, Paternoster

Row, 1827." Over seventy years ago the book had been published, and, as Canon Ainger has told us, "the poets of that time had no doubt as to Hood's true place among them from the first. The public remained untouched; the volume fell all but dead from the Press, and Hood's son and daughter tell us that their father bought up as many of the 'remainder' copies as he was able to save them from the butter-shop." Kinder was the fate reserved for this copy; its earliest owner must have known how to appreciate poetic riches, for he had the book garbed in enduring green leather, neatly tooled in gold—symbolising thus the enduring greenness of the bays accorded for the poet's imperishable gold. Blessings on the memory of that earliest owner of this precious book; I should like to think that he may have been one of "the poets of that time" himself, but poets have all too rarely the means for spending much on bookbinding. It is to be feared that matters are now under the Seventh Edward much as they were in 1827 under the Fourth George. The poets of to-day know the incalculable value of work such as that to which Thomas Hood gave

permanent form in this volume — the public remains untouched. The public of to-day and of three-quarters of a century of yesterdays knows all about Hood, the droll and punster, and even of Hood the rhetorician — for the "Song of the Shirt" and the "Bridge of Sighs" are rhetoric, though sublime rhetoric— but it refuses to take any interest in Hood the poet, who conceived and wrote such a piece of sustained beauty as the "Plea of the Midsummer Fairies," who could pen such perfect lyrics as "Fair Inez." It is the old, old story over again; the shoemaker must stick to his last if he would have his fellows look upon him as a respectable citizen—he has begun by making boots and shoes, and boots and shoes he must go on making to the end, with, perhaps, at the dictate of Fashion, a holiday task at the making of sandals. Thomas Hood, as quite a young man, had published his "Odes and Addresses," and his "Whims and Oddities," and the public, having signified its approval thereof, tacitly bade him go on doing the same thing, so that when, while yet on the junior side of thirty, he published a volume of mature poetry, that same public would have

none of it. "Throw away the lyre," was the cry; "we know that you can play on the Jew's-harp, and unless you play that we will not listen to you."

Poor, brave Hood! He was conscious, as a poet must be, of his own great gifts, and was made bitterly aware that he must keep his candle well under a bushel the while he kept striking flaming fusees to the wonderment of gapers. He had a splendid revenge on his death-bed, when his swan song was echoing throughout the length and breadth of the land; but, as it was bitterly written at the time, "it was necessary for Thomas Hood still to do one thing ere the wide circle and the profound depth of his genius were to the full acknowledged; that one thing was—to die."

Delightful is it indeed — delightful beyond expression—to read the well-loved poetry from the very type and page in which the poet first had them made into an imperishable book; to meet here anew the delicate fancies of the "Plea" (dedicated to Charles Lamb), the beautiful story of "Hero and Leander" told as beautifully as it was ever given to poet to tell it, the fine conception of "Lycus the

Centaur," to revel in the lyric beauty of a dozen shorter pieces. It were cheating the appreciative reader, perhaps, to talk so much of this book and not to give a few words of the poet's own, and therefore, as old favourites of my own, I give the fine prosopopeia which opens the ode to Autumn, and the opening and closing stanzas of the unforgetable "Fair Inez":

"I saw old Autumn in the misty morn
Stand shadowless like Silence, listening
To silence, for no lonely bird would sing
Into his hollow ear from woods forlorn,
Nor lowly hedge nor solitary thorn;
Shaking his languid locks all dewy bright
With tangled gossamer that fell by night,
Pearling his coronet of golden corn."

Here is an autumn effect produced with wonderful sureness. I hope that my fellow-lovers of the poet will forgive me for taking part of a beautiful song from its context.

"O saw ye not fair Inez?
She's gone into the West,
To dazzle when the sun is down,
And rob the world of rest;
She took our daylight with her,
The smiles that we love best,
With morning blushes on her cheek,
And pearls upon her breast.

Farewell, farewell fair Inez,
That vessel never bore
So fair a lady on its deck,
Nor danced so light before,—
Alas for pleasure on the sea,
And sorrow on the shore!
The smile that blest one lover's heart
Has broken many more."

This volume, long known, but never met before, has a place among the best-treasured of my possessions, and the circumstance of its acquisition reconciles me to the passing of Booksellers' Row.

A BIG BOOK

How shall we have literary treasures envolumed for our reading? Shall we have the literature of an age small-typed into a single Brobdingnagian volume, or each small work issued by itself as a Lilliputian booklet? There is much that may be said on both sides of the question, as mine host remarked in the matter disputed between Commodore Trunnion and his friend Mr Hatchway. For awhile I found myself ranged, so to speak, on the side of the "big-endians," because during recent bookstall wanderings I had lighted upon a portly volume of a most notable character. It has one thousand and sixteen large octavo pages, forms a more or less solid body of about one hundred and thirty-two cubic inches, and weighs four pounds. Think of it, ye purveyors of Temple, Bibelot, and other pretty minim editions of classic literature! Statistics are as the very breath of the nostrils of the present genera-

tion — your readers of tit-bitised literature would rather have a tabulated statement of the number of letters used in a complete edition of Shakespeare's works than the finest exposition of his poetic beauties. Hence this tickling of the groundlings by describing the physical content of a remarkable bookstall find. The intellectual content is not ascertainable by any rule of arithmetic yet taught in the schools. Before proceeding to touch upon some of the rarities and beauties enshrined in this portly tome, it may be as well to summarise a chapter of nineteenth-century history not remotely connected therewith. The chapter concerns one Robert Southey, Poet Laureate, who, in 1831, as he had often done before, and as he often did after—produced a book. Ten years earlier a firm of publishers had sent to the poet a copy of Dr Aiken's "Select Works of the British Poets," and in acknowledging this Southey pointed out that the compiler had begun very much about the period at which he should have left off. His reasons he afterwards explained thus: "No one will suppose that this casual observation was meant to disparage the contents of that volume. What

it implied was an opinion that the poets whose works were thus brought together had been, and were still, frequently reprinted in various forms, but that the elder poets, the fathers of our poetry, were some very scarce, and others to be obtained only in the general collections of Dr Anderson and Mr Chalmers." The hint thus thrown out was acted upon after some years, when Southey was asked if he would edit such a work, which, it was a *sine qua non*, was to include the whole of Spenser's "Faerie Queene" and Drayton's "Poly-olbion" in its entirety. Either of these works might be depended upon (the days of India-paper had not dawned) to make a fairly bulky volume by itself, but Southey did not despair of yet finding space for a goodly representation of the best of the poets who flourished before the days of "rare Ben." He set to work, marked the matter which he would wish included in the book, and prepared brief introductory notes. Here his work as editor came to an end, for, as he said, somewhat naïvely, in his preface, "it is not to be supposed that I could afford either time or eyesight for correcting the proof-sheets of such a volume." Still, if the

busy Poet Laureate could not fulfil the minutiæ of his editorial task, he had some excellent qualifications for the more important part of the work—that of selecting the materials which should be representative of our national poetry produced during the centuries which preceded the seventeenth.

Heavily handicapped by having to include within his scheme the two portentously lengthy poems named, he was yet enabled by the small-typing of the "Poly-olbion" within the briefest compass to include a great deal else that is indispensable to the student of English literature—much, indeed, that is for various reasons more talked about than read. It is true that for Southey our poetic literature began with Chaucer—he ignores Langland and Gower—but, even so, he gave his readers much which was then unobtainable, and gave it them—or rather Messrs Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, gave it them—at the price of a three-volume novel. Two generations have passed since the book was published, and much which is given in it is to-day talked about, but is practically unobtainable. I do not intend to give a catalogue of my big book's contents, but

cannot forbear pointing out that its discovery was the more important from its comprising quite a number of poems classic in reputation, familiar (by name) to all of us, but very difficult, as has been said, of obtainment. Chaucer is allowed some sixty double-columned pages, and these pages present the Prologue, the Knighte's, the Man of Lawe's, the Clerke's, and Squiere's tales from the "Canterbury Tales," "The Assembly of Fowls," "Of the Cuckow and the Nightingale," "The Flower and the Leaf," "Good Counsail of Chaucer," and "To his Empty Purse." Then follows rarer matter, for our Chaucer can be got to-day in various forms, from the shilling Canterbury booklet to the grand many-volumed Clarendon Press edition. Most readers or students of to-day who wished to become acquainted with the works of John Skelton, the "glory and light of English letters," as Erasmus named him, would have some difficulty in getting hold of them except from the stores of some big library; I was lucky, for here are "The Boke of Colyn Clout" and "The Boke of Philip Sparow" at length—the short-lined poems being set three columns to the page, to economise space. "The power,

the strangeness, the volubility of his language, the intrepidity of his satire, and the perfect originality of his manner render Skelton one of the most extraordinary poets of any age or country." So says Southey, and Skelton himself says:

> "For though my rime be ragged,
> Tattered and jagged,
> Rudely rayne beaten,
> Rusty and moothe eaten,
> If ye talke will therewyth,
> It hath in it some pith."

These two "Bokes," with their familiarity of expression, their rough-and-ready rhyming—as it seemeth to modern ears—exercise a real fascination owing to a diversity of qualities, and they must be read by all earnest students of our literature and our language. Old Skelton's manner of interpolating Latin passages through his work is a striking example of the transition period in which he wrote.

Skelton is followed by Stephen Hawes, who is represented by his most important poem—some six thousand lines in length — briefly known as "The Pastime of Plesure," but more fully entitled "The Historie of Graunde Amoure

and la Bell Pucel, called the Pastime of Plesure, conteining the knowledge of the Seven Sciences, and the course of man's life in this Worlde. Invented by Stephen Hawes, Grome of King Henry the Seventh his chamber"—the very title is a pleasure to the lover of old romance, and the poem itself (a kind of foretaste of "The Faerie Queene") has much to delight the congenial reader, and a surprise in store in the closing lines of the tenth stanza of "Capit. xlii.":

> "O mortall folke, you may beholde and se
> How I lye here, sometime a mighty knight
> The ende of joye, and all prosperitie
> Is death at last, through his course and myght
> After the day, there cometh the darke nyght
> For thoughe the day be never so long
> At last the belles ringeth to evensong."

The "Pastime" is followed by four pages devoted to Surrey, the singer in praise of "his love Geraldine," and these by Sackville's "Induction to a Mirrour for Magistrates," and his "Complaynt of Henrye Duke of Buckingham," with its quaint reversal of the Scriptural phrase in "O let no Prynce put trust in commontie." Here, too, *in extenso* is quaint old Thomas

Tusser's "Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry, as well for the Champion or open Country as for the Woodland or Several," his "Points of Huswifery United to the Comfort of Husbandry," and his miscellanies. "This good, honest, homely, useful old rhymer was born about the year 1520, at Rivenhall, near Witham, in Essex. He died about the year 1580, in London, and was buried in St Mildred's Church, in the Poultry. The course of his industrious but unprosperous life is related by himself among the multifarious contents of his homespun Georgics, a work once in such repute that Lord Molesworth, writing in 1723, and proposing that a school for husbandry should be erected in every county, advised that 'Tusser's old Book of Husbandry should be taught to the boys, to read, to copy, and to get by heart,' and that it should be reprinted and distributed for that purpose. Tusser's poem, though in all respects one of the most curious books in our language, and formerly one of the most popular, has never been included in any general collection of the poets." Many readers must have been grateful to Southey for remedying this; I assuredly am,

for I was here enabled to read the work for the first time, having only met with Tusser before in quoted scraps. It is a wonderful work this, by a shrewd writer, a quaint forerunner of "Poor Richard" and of William Cobbett, but one who, though he wrote so well of "good husbandry," husbanded his own resources in the sixteenth century far less successfully than did Franklin in the eighteenth or Cobbett in the nineteenth, for, as Fuller quaintly put it, "he spread his bread with all sorts of butter, yet none would stick thereon." But if Tusser did not prosper himself, he could give much good advice to those who would prosper, and no point of detail escaped him, whether he was telling the husbandman how to look after the hopfield or instructing the housewife in baking:

> "New bread is a drivell,
> Much crust is as evil."

The entertaining old writer must not detain us, for at the conclusion of his verses we are not a fourth of the way through this bulky volume.

Next come Gascoigne's poems, his "Fruites of Warre," his "Steele Glas," etc., and turning

over the pages I am struck by the similarity of the closing passages of the "Steele Glas" to Oliver Wendell Holmes's "Latter Day Warnings." When, says the Tudor poet, "shal our prayers end?"

> "When tinkers make no more holes than they founde,
> When thatchers think their wages worth their work,
> When colliers put no dust into their sacks,
> . . . When vintners mix no water with their wine,
> When printers passe none errours in their bookes," etc.

"When all these things are ordered as they ought," Gascoigne concludes, then may the priests make holiday, "and pray no more but ordinarie prayers." The American humorist three centuries later said:

> "When legislators keep the law,
> When banks dispense with bolts and locks,
> When berries, whortle, rasp, and straw
> Grow bigger downwards through the box,"

and so on, giving many examples that had been cited by the earlier writer; then, he says, referring to an "end of the world" craze of the hour, "then order your ascension robe." The parallel is interesting.

A BIG BOOK

Our next three hundred pages may be turned as one, for they contain the better known "Faerie Queene." Then come the poems of Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, one who was, in the words of his epitaph, "servant to Queen Elizabeth, counsellor to King James, and friend to Sir Philip Sidney," and who—says Southey, writing a decade before the date of "Sordello"—"is certainly the most difficult of all our poets." A score of close-set pages are devoted to Samuel Daniel, and then come Drayton's "Nymphidia," and, in eighty odd pages of eye-trying type, the "Poly-olbion," that wonderful medley of poetry and topographical information. Poems of Sir John Davies, of Dr Donne, and of Thomas Carew follow, occupying some sixty rich pages, and then we have Phineas Fletcher's "Purple Island; or, The Isle of Man," that strange poetical account of man and his body for which the popularity of "John Halifax, Gentleman," should keep up a certain demand. Between the work of Phineas Fletcher and that of his brother Giles, "Christ's Victory and Triumph," come a few pages of sonnets, "Flowers of Sion," etc., by William Drummond of Hawthornden, "the first Scotch poet

who wrote well in English." A dozen pages of Wither's characteristic poems are followed by sixty containing Browne's "Britannia's Pastorals," a work full of beauty, although it is beauty much neglected; and then come another sixty, giving us Davenant's "Gondibert." The "Castara" of William Habington—"amiable man and irreproachable poet"—and a few songs by Colonel Lovelace end the book, surely one of the richest that any library contains. Luck (and two shillings and threepence) made this treasure mine, and when I read it I wonder that some enterprising publisher does not give the present generation some such body of acknowledged poetry for which the demand would not justify the separate publication of the different items, great though some of them are. Here is, indeed, a perfect work for the man reduced—on desert island or in solitary cell—to have his library in a single volume.

THE MOST BOOKFUL OF LAUREATES

HANDLING of the portly volume in which Robert Southey gave to readers of the early thirties the greater part of the body of English poetry from the time of Chaucer to that of Lovelace, made me turn my attention to an earlier "find," which embodies some of Southey's own work—and of his least well-known work, if a phrase predicating that any of Southey's books are well known to-day be permissible. These volumes were bought some years ago, and put upon the shelf for future perusal, the buyer only having at the time but a slight second-hand knowledge of the discursive "Doctor." Here, however, are the five handsome, tall, calf-bound volumes, with marbled edges and marbled end-papers—a book seems built to stand with such—and labelled on the backs, "The Doctor, Southey." Within the covers are the armorial

bookplates of "William Thomas Bridges, D.C.L." (to be companioned by those of Autolycus when R. keeps his word). The title-pages betray no authorship; they are printed in red lettering, with a black intersected diamond figuring on them, and are briefly lettered "The Doctor, etc."; vols. i. and ii. are "third edition, 1839," vol. iii. is "second edition, 1836," vols. iv. and v. are first editions of 1837 and 1838 respectively. But to come from the title-pages to the books. What are they? Well, incidentally, they are all things by turn, but nothing long (except to the congenial spirit who will find them entertaining throughout their 1787 pages), and they form—with a couple of supplementary volumes added ten years later under an editor—what has been happily called a glorified commonplace book, a medley of entertaining reading which reminds us now of the more or less inconsequent ramblings (and pilferings) of Sterne, and now of the terse tales of the best of the British essayists.

The title-page is mystifying, but opposite to it we have a quotation from "Butler's Remains," which—it were difficult to explain why—suggests the whimsicality of the whole. It runs,

"There is a kind of physiognomy in the title of books no less than in the faces of men, by which a skilful observer will as well know what to expect from the one as the other." Whimsicality is suggested by the physiognomy of this work, and reading does not proceed far in it before the reader finds that whimsical it is in the most delightful fashion. Each volume (excepting the second) opens with a quaint "prelude of mottoes" in Latin and Greek, French, Italian, German, Spanish, and English; then comes a list of the chapters with their mottoes, and then the work itself, which does not—supposing that we have taken up the first volume—begin at the beginning! It starts with a "Postscript" (how many prefaces should be thus honestly named!) and this is followed by Ante-Initial Chapter VII., and so on down to Chapter II. A.I.; then comes the Dedication, then the first Ante-Initial Chapter, followed by Ante-Preface, Preface, and Initial Chapter, and only then come the regular—or Post-Initial—chapters, with occasional deviations into "Inter-chapters" and such like eccentricities, including a chapter with its title at its close. Eccentric enough, in all conscience

—reminding the reader of Sterne's black, blank, and mottled pages of "Tristram Shandy."

How shall these voluminous ramblings be described? The title, it must always be remembered, is not merely "The Doctor," but "The Doctor, etc.," for, although Dr Daniel Dove of Doncaster is discussed now and again all through, the scope of the book is better if less clearly indicated by the "etc.," "which in its omnisignificance may promise anything, and yet pledges the writer to nothing." Elsewhere of this abbreviated *et cetera* the author says: "It specifies only the Doctor; but his gravities and his levities, his opinion of men and things, his speculations, moral and political, physical and spiritual, his philosophy and his religion, each blending with each, and all with all, these are comprised in the 'etc,' of my title-page—these and his Pantagruelism to boot." Fooling much of it may be, but it is admirable fooling, the fooling of genius, which is vastly preferable to the wisdom of the fool; against the Hon. Fastidious Feeble-Wit, Lord Makemotion Ganderman, and Dr Dense, the author capitally defends himself in his 60th chapter. The Preface is written, it is declared, "pavonesque-

ment," with a peacock's quill, and that fact may have something to do with the radiating colours of the whole; there is the brightness, the variety, eye-delighting, and wonder-raising, of the feather of Juno's bird running throughout the work. Great as is the range of its subjects, wide and deep as are the topics discussed, there is nothing strained, dull, or didactic in the five volumes, it is not difficult to believe that the author's words half-way through the second might have been written at the close of the fifth —"I have not bitten my nails over a single sentence."

Man is defined here as "a dupeable animal," and those readers who turn to "The Doctor, etc.," expecting a novel (which one of his critics told the author it should have been) will find themselves duped by their own preconceived notions. It is far less of a novel than "Tristram Shandy," and not very much more of one than, say, Montaigne's "Essays." It is true that we revert now and again to incidents in the life of Doctor Daniel Dove, but for the most part we are kept wandering in the fertile domain of Digression. Delightful, indeed, are those wanderings to any such as Autolycus—anyone

who loves literary gossip on all things, even though his education may have stopped far short of his many-tongued guide; delightful, too, are many of the happy phrasings, the verbal rarities (impossibilitated, to wit), the memorable sentences; how happy is the reference to Boswell as Johnson's "better half"; how neatly put the truism that "it is in the exertion of individuals that all national reformation must begin"; how pleasant (to Paterfamilias with twinfants) to read "a house is never perfectly furnished for enjoyment unless there is a child in it rising three years or a kitten rising six weeks"; how amusing is this *apropos* of the lost Ten Tribes, "there are, however, three Tribes in England not named in the Old Testament, who considerably outnumber all the rest. These are the High Vulgarites, who are the children of Rahank and Phashan, the Middle Vulgarites, who are the children of Mammon and of Terade, and the Low Vulgarites, who are the children of Tahag, Rahag, and Bohobtay-il."

It is as impossible to write of this work in orderly fashion as it was for the author to write it in an orderly fashion, and that despite the

dicta of my Lord Shaftesbury, who said "the just composer of a legitimate piece is like an able traveller who exactly measures his journey, considers his ground, premeditates his stages and intervals of relaxation and intention to the very conclusion of his undertaking, that he happily arrives where he first proposed at setting out." In these volumes—take Autolycus, his word for it—shall be found many entertaining matters. Here we learn that in the year 1800 there was a "great controversy whether it was the beginning of a century or the end of one; a controversy in which all magazines, all newspapers, and all persons took part." Here we learn that John Murray—whom we had looked upon as almost co-existent with the art (or artifice) of publishing—in the early part of the century took over the flourishing business of one Miller in Albemarle Street. Here we shall find the original of a story since become classic in the nursery—the story of the Three Bears. Here we shall find that one Elphinston stole a march on Pitman with his spelling reform of Elphinstonography—"hwen dhe entertainment iz over, dhe bil may doutles com in, etc." Here we shall learn (in a Chapter Extraordinary) of a

book-club censorship that preceded by generations that of the bookstall and the circulating library, and showing that Morality Smith, Mudie, and Co. only plagiarise in the matter of *lese delicatesse* from "a certain book club or society (no matter where)." Here we learn that the Big Gooseberry is more than a thing of the day before yesterday, and that "there is a Gooseberry book annually printed at Manchester" for the edification of gooseberry-ologists.

One of the "humours" of the work was its impenetrable anonymity, and the author, to baffle the curious—wiser than Byron when writing his "Bards"—quoted freely from "Dr Southey" and "the most bookful of Laureates"; he opened the third volume with a delightful chapter of surmises as to the authorship, for, as he said, "thus much is certain, that before it has been published a week, eight persons will be named as having written it, and these eight positive lies will be affirmed each as positive truths on positive knowledge." Verily Southey might have been writing prophetically of the day before yesterday's nine hours' wonder, "The Love Letters of an

Englishwoman." It could not be his own work, the Laureate declared, for "there is neither his mannerism, nor his moralism, nor his methodism." Byron's? "Why, the author fears God, honours the King, and loves his country and his kind"; Wordsworth? "What! an Elephant cutting capers on the slack wire"; Coleridge? "The method, indeed, of the book might lead to such a suspicion—but then it is intelligible throughout"; and so on "away the dogs go, whining here, snuffing there, nosing in this place, pricking their ears in that, and now full-mouthed upon a false scent—and now again all at fault. Oh, the delight of walking invisible among mankind!" There must have been few authors indeed who could exhibit the range of knowledge both in language and literature displayed by Southey, for whom the reader of these volumes feels a loving admiration felt not for him before. Read them through from the beginning, say I (saying "ditto" to the author), "or, more accurately, from the seventh chapter before the beginning," and then keep the work by you for dipping into, as you dip into Boswell, Pepys, Montaigne.

Thackeray once said: "Montaigne's and Howel's Letters are my bedside books. If I wake at night, I have one or other of them to prattle me to sleep again." Anyone adding to his bedside books should have this learned but entertaining, inconsequent but delightful, prattler, and that in despite of the author's own words in his amusing eleventh interchapter, where he gives "advice to certain readers intended to assist their digestion of these volumes." The Doctor proves a delightful companion for such as like him, and as for those who seek his acquaintance and do not like him, let us exclaim at them, in the magical word invented by Southey for such contingencies—Aballiboozobanganoribo!

"W. M. T." AS BALLAD-MONGER

Though a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles from every bookstall at which he lingers—and he passes by but few unexplored—there are times when Autolycus comes into his own by other means than purchase. By gift, to wit. He was calling one evening upon his friend Mr Muscrit when that worthy enthusiast explained how the arrival of a second-hand book-dealer's catalogue by the early post had dragged him from bed at an unwonted hour and sent him off in a hansom (plutocratic Muscrit!) to secure certain musical treasures named in the list. He bought twenty-nine volumes—there is a picturesque reality about the odd nine for which full credit must be given to Muscrit's artistic sense—and I was shown some of them, taking but a cursory glance, for as one man's meat is another man's poison so one man's literary treasure is another man's literary dross.

It is strange what Muscrit could find so fascinating in his purchase. But, yes, one book did appeal to Autolycus, for as he picked up a slim, half-bound volume he could not but betray his envy. "That," said Muscrit; "oh, I only gave sixpence for that. You may have it if you like." Let it be put on record that—strongly against the grain—Autolycus protested that he could not rob his friend, though it must be confessed that the protest was very much of the character of that of the importuned damsel who, "vowing she would ne'er consent, consented."

And what was this slim book that aroused this covetousness, and which was accepted with such a woful affectation of hesitation? It is simply entitled "Ballads. By W. M. Thackeray," and was published in London in 1857. It is an early edition, with a small sketch on the title-page of a boy with the author's head (and spectacles) with a mask and a fool's bauble in his lap, and it is a copy marked by an earlier possessor in such a way as makes it irresistible to its new owner's taste for the curious. On the fly-leaf is an inscription of a cryptographic nature. So bothersome is the caligraphy that

different readers might give different interpretations, and an indifferent reader might mistake it for Greek, Russian, Chaldaic, cuneiform, or some such unaccustomed "fist." Mrs Autolycus deciphered "ring tailed coon" in the second line, and, when laughed at, triumphantly asked, "If it isn't that, what is it?" No alternative could be suggested, and the reading stood. So far as patience and ingenuity have deciphered it, the inscription runs—it is given as one of the humours of the literature of fly-leaves—Lord Cosmo George Russell, a ring tailed coon (?) bought this book on . . . (even Mrs Autolycus failed here), 1860, at the Farnborough Station to celebrate the triumph of Homeopathy over Allopathy, the Physician being Louis (?) the Great, the disease being irritation (?) of the Brain. Given under my hand and seal at 66, Chester-square, Nov. 11th, 1860. (Signed) Cosmo George Russell." This is followed by a neat seal-impression, with a crest of a goat and the monogram "C.G.R." It were idle to attempt to find a meaning in this without something in the nature of a key to the mystery, and we may pass it by with a smile and turn to the ballads themselves. It

is more especially interesting to do so in that there seems to be with many readers nothing more than a kindly toleration of the great novelist's verse.

Thackeray was so great as novelist that his verse is often looked upon with an indifference which is quite unfair to much of it. There are many memorable things in this little volume —things in which our fathers and our grandfathers delighted, and which we do ill to neglect. There are pieces of Thackeray's which, once read, haunt the memory in pleasantest fashion, pieces which prove that he had in him much of the true poet. It is a case in which a man's more ephemeral work is the better remembered to the prejudice of his best. The very intimacy of the poet is a striking quality, and is perhaps the more remarkable in this particular poet in that he was so reserved in his ordinary life—except with his intimates, with whom he was engagingly open—that one of his fellow-authors declared that he had "known Thackeray eighteen years, and didn't know him" then. His reserve showed itself too, in his expressed wishes as to posthumous biographical treatment. Yet there are passages

in his poems which touch the reader acquainted with his life-story with something of the poignancy felt on reading Lamb's "All, all are gone, the old familiar faces." The reader of the "Ballad of Bouillabaisse," for example, probably long looked upon the penultimate stanza as a mere bit of appropriate sentimentalising, whereas it must have been in truth a cry of deepest feeling. So much is familiar in this volume that it is impossible to put one's self in the position of one of its readers of the 'fifties, to whom the permanent in the work was probably largely overshadowed by the merely topical verse on "The Palace Made of Windows," "On a Late Hospicious Ewent," etc. That "Ballad of Bouillabaisse," how good it is! as good, one feels inclined to think, as anything from the lyra elegantiarum of the nineteenth century. The happy philosophy, too, of the "King of Brentford's Testament," with its neat turning of the tables on the parsimonious—how can it be forgotten! The delightful humour of it never stales; at the dozenth reading the surprise stanza tickles the fancy as much as at the first, and we gloat over the dire disappointment of the money-loving Prince, who,

expecting to inherit his father's all, hears the will read up to its astonishing close:

"Wherefore, my lease and copyholds,
My lands and tenements,
My parks, my farms, my orchards,
My houses, and my rents,
My Dutch stock and my Spanish stock,
My five and three per cents.,
I leave to you, my Thomas."
("What, all?" poor Edward said.
"Well, well, I should have spent them,
And Tom's a prudent head")—
"I leave to you, my Thomas—
To you, in trust for Ned."

The opening ballad, "The Chronicle of the Drum," is as certain of immortality as any verse of the kind; it tells at some length—but at a length that is none too great—that which Thackeray's friend Douglas Jerrold put in much briefer compass in a few stanzas, in which the sheepskin of the drum was traced from Cheviot Hills to the battlefield, and the conclusion come to that still—

"Will man the tempter follow,
Nor learn that glory, like its drum,
Is but a sound, and hollow?"

"The White Squall," how good that is also!

Fragments from its spirited verses have been familiar from the time of boyhood, and a reader since grown up can better appreciate the closing lines, in which we have that characteristic touch which has been already referred to. Then, also among the earlier pieces in the collection, comes "The Mahogany Tree,"—that beautiful saga of memory and friendship—

> "Here let us sport,
> Boys, as we sit;
> Laughter and wit
> Flashing so free.
> Life is but short—
> When we are gone,
> Let them sing on
> Round the old tree."

Made for a particular occasion, the verse lives because it applies to many; in it we seem to see more of the author than in much that has been written about him. "The Pen and the Album" is delicious, not for any greatness of conception or brilliance of imagination, but for its engaging intimacy and for its summarised autobiography of the busy man of letters. How

real is the picture that is given (it is the "faithful old gold pen" that is talking)—

"I've writ the foolish fancy of his brain;
The aimless jest that, striking, hath caused pain;
The idle word that he'd wish back again. . . .

I've helped him to pen many a line for bread;
To joke, with sorrow aching in his head;
And make your laughter when his own heart bled. . . .

Nor pass the words as idle phrases by;
Stranger, I never writ a flattery,
Nor signed the page that registered a lie."

Thackeray penned an appropriate epitaph for himself in those closing lines. There is a quaint, haunting attraction about one at least of the attempts at writing love songs in the Oriental manner, that beginning—

"I was a timid little antelope;
My home was in the rocks, the lonely rocks."

Someone—was it not Mr Herman Merivale?—has instanced one of these pieces as conclusive proof of Thackeray's right to the proud title of poet; this one is assuredly rich in the illusive quality, although the author classified it among his "Love Songs Made Easy."

Such are the chief items in this happy volume, most of them marked by the highest qualities of the humorist—using that word in its noblest sense, as used by Thackeray himself. The other pieces are, for the most part, such farcical effusions as the "Ballads of Policeman X." and the Hibernian verses, and these are not to-day altogether worthy of their companionship—they strike us much as "Yellowplush" might do bound up with "Esmond."

THE LAUREATE'S "THREE-DECKER"

POVERTY, it is said, makes strange bedfellows, and assuredly Autolycusising makes strange bookfellows. It is some time since there drifted on to my shelves three dark-green cloth-clothed volumes, the light stains on the front covers of which bear obvious witness to their having done service in some circulating library. In an idle moment I took down the stained and long-neglected volumes and (your book-lover is at times a temerarious beast) determined to read them. I did so, and found myself involved in all the mystification and melodrama in which our parents seem to have delighted a generation ago. I found a young man in the ripe twenties of his age moving about a little in society and idling in the country on an income allowed him by a vastly rich cousin, an M.P., to whom he was presumptive heir. I found the young man,

Mortimer Dyneley by name, with two friends, a poor hanger-on to journalism and a clever and unscrupulous barrister-politician. I found Mortimer falling in with a neighbouring clergyman, his sister and his daughter (who spoke somewhat strangely of her paternal aunt and father collectively as her "parents"), and ultimately, of course, falling in love with the girl—Isabelle Chesterton, to wit. Now, Isabelle was the persecuted member of a strange household; never was woman more stepmotherly than this "parental" aunt. The rich cousin's Political Party offends him, and he determines to be avenged, and so seeks to finance the dilettante Mortimer into the House of Commons as a member of the other party. Mortimer has always hankered after the High Arts (our author writes at times as though quite regardless of the possibility of exhausting the compositors' capitals), but Love helps to fire Ambition (these capitals are catching), and he decides to enter the political arena. The Clever but Unscrupulous Friend has everything to gain by Mortimer's political success, and strongly objects to his marriage as likely to militate there-against. The Step-

motherly Aunt emphatically dislikes him, the colourless Father is a puppet in her hands, and at a critical time refuses to see him, and the long-suffering Isabelle is kept out of his way. Machination works through a few chapters, and then—a thunderbolt! The fair Isabelle, who had before been surprised into a declaration of unswerving love for Mortimer, marries the Rich but Objectionable Sexagenarian Cousin. The post brings Mortimer a cheque for a cool thousand, and an intimation that double that amount is in future to be his allowance. Melodramatically he writes "Dishonoured" across it, and returns it to the sender. He is now thrown on his own resources, and there is some chance of the reader finding some sympathy for him. He retires to Caen, in France, and sets about becoming an author (the first resort of the disappointed in all other walks). He cannot satisfy his own fastidious tastes, and though his friend, the Poor Hanger-on to Journalism, has promised to try and "place" things Mortimer does not test him. Then he returns to England for a few days, visits Richmond and falls in with Isabelle Dyneley (*née* Chester-

ton), learns from her lips that by her love for him she had been tricked into marriage with a Jealous Tyrant. A terrible thunderstorm comes on, and for a few hours Mortimer and Isabelle find shelter in an empty and solitary cottage.

Mortimer returns to Caen big with the design of making money and of rescuing his love from her lawful husband. Meanwhile the Clever but Unscrupulous one has been subtly machinating, with the result that Isabelle writes "the most beautiful letter that was ever penned," telling Mortimer that they must not meet again until time has "sobered their emotions," conjuring him to go on with his work, and to "accept whatever opportunity of domestic love and comfort the future may present." Now at Caen Mortimer's only friends are an old French officer and his daughter. That daughter, Marian, of course, has fallen in love with the handsome, accomplished, and unhappy English visitor. The old officer dies, and Mortimer (has not Isabelle enjoined it on him?) takes his chance of domestic love and comfort, and marries the daughter. A paper arrives at the little Caen home announcing "that on the 10th

inst., at Richmond, Surrey, Isabelle, wife of Roger Dyneley, had been safely delivered of a son and heir." Mortimer is, as he might well be, strangely moved at the news. Again (on poem-publishing thoughts intent) he visits London, leaving his wife at Havre. While he is away a daughter is born to him, but is born dead. A few days earlier, in the same inn—thanks to the long arm of circumstance and the machinations of the Clever but Unscrupulous one,—another infant had been born. Marian agrees to pass off this one as her own and accepts the friendly offices of its mother as nurse. Mortimer hurries homewards on hearing the news of his child's birth and finds his wife taking but the most listless interest in her (supposed) child. She takes still less interest when she finds that the infant does *not* influence the father to the desired extent of making him accept reconciliation with his rich relative. Sick at heart with jealousy of her husband's earlier love and at her own ignoble duplicity, she runs away. Mortimer then goes with his (supposed) infant and a faithful servant to Italy.

In the course of nature, but none too hurriedly, the Sexagenarian, who has "repaid the

simple purity of the angel with the complex hate of the fiend," dies. A couple of years later Mortimer Dyneley sends his supposed, but by him for certain reasons called adopted, daughter to England to the care of the widowed Isabelle. Seven years later again he returns and finds the Richmond *menage* consisting of the widow Isabelle (still the loyal lover) her son Walter, his own supposed but said to be adopted daughter Florence, and her companion, a Mrs Landon. Walter and Florence have become lovers. In a near-by cottage —of which we have already heard—there lies dying a woman who proves to be the other mother of the Havre inn. She is being assiduously attended by Mrs Landon. Then come the surprises and the sorting out of these very mixed folk. The dying woman proves to be not only the mother of Florence, but also the wife of the Clever but Unscrupulous one, who has incidentally been attempting to blackmail Isabelle owing to his knowledge of her son's paternity. Isabelle has believed Mortimer's tale of his "adopted" daughter, knowing nothing of his having taken her advice and married, and thinks that he has returned after a long

interval to marry *her*, and lo! Mrs Landon turns out to be no other than Marian his wife! We take leave of them travelling on the Continent.

The title of the "three-decker" is "An Artist's Proof." It was published in 1864, and its author is Mr Alfred Austin, the present Poet-Laureate of England!

"THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

THE scene is the New Cut, a few yards from where it turns out of the Westminster Bridge Road. We are standing at a regulation costermonger's barrow, laden with a great variety, to outward seeming, of literary wares. Behind us —we are standing on the kerbstone — is the gorgeous display of a cheap greengrocery store (rich in other fruit than that of the tree of knowledge so unappetisingly set before us), the air is heavy with the nauseating smell from a near-by cook-shop, of which the windows, steam-clouded from within, bear, in bold type, this simple legend: "What are the wild waves saying? Come and get a good dinner for sixpence!"

The end of the barrow by which we are standing is piled high with odd numbers of the *London Journal*, the *Family Herald*, the *London Reader*, and various novelettes, the whole gathered together under one comprehensive

label as sellable at "Five for a penny." We will not devote five seconds to these. The first of the other two sections into which the barrow is divided is filled with a higgledy-piggledy collection of sermons, schoolbooks, hymns, and odd volumes to be sold at 3d. and 4d. each. 'Tis from just such an odd lot of literary winnowings that we may now and again gather up by lucky chance some precious ears of wheat. But no; we turn them over, one after another, with a practised hand, and scan their titles with as practised an eye—here are Doddridge's "Sermons," Watt's "Hymns, "Ancient and Modern" ditto, "Cornelius Nepos," Colenso's "Algebra," a ragged "Index to the *Spectator*, *Tatler*, and other Essayists," an odd volume of the "Sermons" of Mr Yorick, one or two much-bescribbled Clarendon Press plays of Shakespeare—just, in fact, the usual miscellany which experience has taught us is generally to be found at such a stall. We pass to the next section, distinguished by a considerable advance in the price of its contents—for a roughly-written board, which had at one time done duty as part of the cover of a quarto Foxe's "Book of Martyrs," is marked with

delicious vagueness, "6d., 1s., and 1s. 6d. each." We smile at the business-wisdom of the proprietor of the barrow, for he evidently wishes to catch his customer before finally fixing upon the price to be asked for any particular volume. We have known this done before. Just to test our dealer in literary flotsam and jetsam, we pick up a volume—to which, in self-defence be it added, we would not accord shelf-room—"How much for this?" in the simulated tone of the over-eager having lighted upon a find.

"That, sir," says the man, with a hasty glance at our passing respectability, and another at the meretricious cloth covering of the Dodd's "Beauties of Shakespeare" we hold in our hand, "That, sir, is eighteenpence."

With an inward smile at our own perspicacity in gauging the man's business method, we replace Dodd upon the board, and glance over its companions.

"I'll take a shilling," says the man.

We murmur something about not wanting it particularly—fearing every moment that he will offer it for sixpence, and thus place us in an awkward fix. The prices of the volumes in

this last division of the truck seem to be based mainly upon the gaudy "get up" of their binding, and we are about to pass on to the next barrow when a title takes our eye—"The Twilight of the Gods."

It is that of a slatey-blue cloth-covered volume rather the worse for exposure to the weather, if not for use. The book is partly hidden by the price-advertising relic of the "Book of Martyrs," so that the authors' name is not visible; with no very good reason for doing so other than idle curiosity to know what the book is about—rather, perhaps, guided by those kindly spirits (to snap up and adapt a few unconsidered lines of Mr Pope's):—

> "The light militia of the lower sky
> Who, though unseen, are ever on the wing,
> Hang o'er the truck and show the valued thing,"

—we move the board and withdraw the volume from between a tattered copy of the "Pilgrim's Progress" and "As in a Looking Glass." The title-page reveals that "The Twilight of the Gods" is by Richard Garnett, and that it was published in 1888 by Mr Fisher Unwin. Be it confessed that this came with something of

a shock, for we had hitherto flattered ourselves upon being well acquainted with the titles, at least, of all recent work. Yet here was a volume, and by the Keeper of the Printed Books, of which we had never even heard!

A hasty glance over the pages showed that the volume contained many tales; the titles alone strike the fanciful taste as sufficient promises of good things — "The City of Philosophers," "The Demon Pope," "Madam Lucifer," "Bishop Addo and Bishop Gaddo." Surely here there must be things after our own heart. We open at the title piece and scan the first few pages with delight. We read of the sudden loosening of the chains of Prometheus and its attendant wonders, all told in a nervous, clear, and incisive style. Man has asserted himself, and the gods are to be named no more in Caucasia. Prometheus finds himself upon a mountain, mortal. He meets with Elenko, a discredited priestess of Apollo, fleeing from the zealous persecution of some Christians. Prometheus makes himself known to her, and shows her that Zeus and the gods of Olympus were not what she had believed. They go hand-in-hand down the mountain, he bearing

the tormenting vulture, which has fallen dead on the loosening of his chains. They meet the early Christians, who have been despoiling the temple of Apollo, and are at first stoned, until Elenko has the presence of mind to make the sign of the cross, and to tell Prometheus to do the same. A Bishop comes forward and questions Elenko, and her perfectly truthful answers are quite naturally misconstrued:—

"Who, then, has persuaded thee to renounce Apollo?"

Elenko pointed to Prometheus.

"An enemy of Zeus, then?"

"Zeus has not such another enemy in the world."

"I knew it, I was sure of it," said the Bishop; "I can always tell a Christian when I see him. Wherefore speaks he not?"

"He is ancient, for all his vigorous mien. His martyrdom began ere our present speech was, nor could he learn this in his captivity."

"Martyrdom! captivity!" exclaimed the prelate gleefully; "I thought we were coming thither. An early martyr, doubtless?"

"A very early martyr."

"Fettered and manacled?"

"Behold his wrists and ankles."

"Tortured, of course?"

"Incredibly!"

"Miraculously kept alive to this day?"

"In an entirely supernatural manner."

"Now," said the Bishop, "I would wager my mitre and ring that his life was prolonged by the daily ministration of yonder fowl that he caresses with such singular affection?"

"Never," replied Elenko, "for one day did that most punctual bird omit to visit him."

"Hurrah!" shouted the Bishop. "And now, its mission accomplished, the blessed creature, as I am informed, is found dead at the foot of this mountain. Saints and angels! This is glorious! On your knees, ye infidels!"

The upshot of it all is that Prometheus is hailed as a mysterious saint, whose sole interpreter is Elenko. Thus whispers the holy Bishop to the ingenuous maid: "You seem a sensible young person. Just hint to our friend that we don't want to hear anything about his theology, and the less he talks about the Primitive Church the better. No doubt he is a most intelligent man, but he cannot be up to all the most recent improvements."

Rapidly we scan other pages of the book, conscious that here is a true literary "find," and that—O rarity!—in modern literature. A hurried glance at this page and that reveals more and more of the genial satire, touched and coloured with poetic imagination, of the delicate irony, the refreshing wit, and the beautiful limpid style. All these impressions are gathered as we snatch a glance at one after another of these wonderful unconventional tales. Some deal with Indian, some with Chinese, and some with European life and religion, all the subjects alike—Occidental as well as Oriental—being seemingly treated with the same consummate charm. At length, in random openings—already determined to buy! —we light upon a page in "The Demon Pope" where the Cardinals discover the occupant of St Peter's Chair possessed of a cloven hoof, Lucifer having been granted the office and likeness of His Holiness for a single day. He finds out all sorts of things, but has at length to give way to the rightful Pope, who expresses a hope that the Devil will take some of the Cardinals away with him. "Thank you," replied Lucifer; "it is more

to my interest to leave them where they are."

Almost from the reading of the very first line we had considered the "Twilight of the Gods" as our own. The kerbstone seller of books had eyed us closely, and asked with some assurance the top price for the volume. We paid it without demur, and dipping into the "Twilight of the Gods," continued our way through the twilight of the New Cut. We had not gone far before a voice beside us said—

"You shall have it for sixpence, sir."

We turned; it was the bookseller holding the tawdry "Beauties" of Dodd! We looked unutterable things at the intruder, and firmly clutching our delightful find bore it away for quiet perusal and a place on the shelf that holds the few best-loved books.

"APRES MOI—"

"APRES moi—le déluge." The words of the French monarch have been cited again and again as the expression of intensest egoism; but, after all, do they not sum up in the brief compass of four words a feeling common to all mankind? We talk about when we are gone, we make testamentary dispositions trying to keep posthumous control over the things which we have possessed and the family circle of which we have been a part; we try to think what the world will be like wanting us, but all the while we are subtly deceiving ourselves —we cannot look at that future without a subconscious conception of ourselves in relation to it. It is of the nature of mortality not to be able to realise its annihilation in time and space, and much of our sentimentalising about the world's future is flattered by the sense that we shall then somehow have some mysterious but no less real conscious relation to the new

order of things. It would almost seem as though everyone dimly believed at some part of his life that a miracle was to occur in his behalf, and a physical immortality would be accorded him. The artist who sets out to achieve the production of a triumphant masterpiece feels that he must live to complete it, and all the while Time the Destroyer cares for great works no more than for lesser ones, for great artists no more than for humblest artisans. As a collector of books Autolycus has felt that if it were possible to make appeal to Time—as Shakespeare did in Hood's beautiful poem—it should be on behalf of the patient gatherer of well-considered or unconsidered trifles. But against this view comes the thought that, after all, the labours of Time and of the collector are diametrically opposed, the latter devoting himself to the rescue of things which the former has doomed; the collector is no less certainly the would-be enemy of Time than is Time the destined conqueror of the collector. It is the old story of Ajax defying the lightning. We seek by an accumulation of books and other things, to preserve them from the ravening tooth, but we only delay the

inevitable for a few years, a lifetime may be, or—if our immediate heirs are congenial—a century or so.

It may be said that these thoughts, born of melancholy and sentiment, have little to connect them with Autolycusising, with the haunting of bookstalls for the acquisition of cheap finds —words are lame things, for any book that is truly a book is cheap at any price,—but the thoughts are the outcome of a consideration of the small collection of books which one such Autolycus has made. Here are some hundreds of volumes — thousands, perhaps, would not now be inaccurate,—a large proportion of which have formed parts of other collections, have, presumably, been read and prized by other owners. Those owners died, and their books were scattered hither and thither, until from all quarters by varying chances they have happened together on my shelves. And, *apres moi?* Ah, well, it may be sad for me to contemplate, but there will be no exception to the rule, the collection which I have formed will be broken up, and the books be scattered among new owners, for individual possessors are but incidents in the lives of

good books. How often have the older volumes here changed ownership during the time of their material existence, of how many collections, small or large, have they formed part?

Sometimes a book bears written or pictorial evidences of these incidental changes and we read the names of various owners—names that are now merely so many meaningless ink scratches representing that the book has been owned by an item of humanity whose one time existence is possibly only acknowledged on this faded fly-leaf and in some old parish records. Here and there the ink scratches or the book-plates may be of folk who wrote their names also, more or less legibly, on the page of history which was open to them, and we may by research find something more about them than their mere names. Here, for instance—bought a dozen years ago in Oxford Street for eighteenpence—is Theobald's Shakespeare, in seven volumes bound in well-worn calf-skin, and in each volume are a couple of book-plates, showing that the set belonged firstly to "Alured Clarke, D.D.," and later to "Colonel Clarke." The "Dictionary of National Biography" teaches us that these men, uncle and nephew,

were persons of some importance in their day, the one as Dean of Exeter, and the other as Commander-in-Chief in India, and Field-Marshal of the British Army. Where are the companion books from the divine's and the soldier's libraries? Did these volumes—their "state" suggests that they may have done so — journey out with "Colonel Clarke," then promoted and Sir Alured Clarke, when he went to India—fighting against the Dutch at the Cape on the way —when he became distinguished as an officer, and rose to the highest rank? This history the books refuse to reveal, and also what their journeyings have been since the aged Field-Marshal died in 1832, but we cannot help musing over the way which they travelled to the low estate from which they have been temporarily rescued — only temporarily for, *apres moi?*

Here one of the oldest and best-prized books in this small collection is a delightful dumpy duodecimo containing "The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living" and "The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying," by Jeremy Taylor. The former work is dated 1651, but has nothing to distinguish it from a first edition which

should, say the authorities, be dated a year earlier, while the latter work is frankly marked a second edition (1652). How did this precious book come to the sixpenny-box of a Holywell Street shop in which I found it? In 1702 it belonged to a lady, who inscribed on the fly-leaf in a bold hand "Anne Roberts, Her Book"; then another owner — her son, perchance — scrawled "Thos. Roberts, 1726," right across the title, while another owner "Anne Thelwall" has twice written her name upon the same page. The book is simply bound in old calf, plainly tooled, and one of its early owners who did it this service has noted the cost at which it was done, "binding 7d."—would that our binders wrought so cheaply and so well to-day! A later hand has written with brief eloquence inside the cover "1880 July Putticks." Owner after owner has passed away, but the book remains, and when another of its owners has followed the earlier ones it is to be hoped that it may fall into such loving hands as thine, B., who gloriest in the beautiful thought and language of the grand old divine.

Here is an old edition, 1673, of "The Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral, of Sir Francis

Bacon, Lord Verulam, Viscount St Alban. With a Table of the Colours of Good and Evil. Whereunto is added the Wisdom of the Ancients. Enlarged by the Honourable Author himself, and now more exactly Published," this handsome old book has written on its fly-leaf, in ink of an enviably permanent colour, "Katherine Blount, 1697." Later owners have forborne to inscribe it. Here, oldest of all my biblical treasures, is "Le Rime del Petrarcha," a beautiful small octavo in an old richly-tooled binding which was issued from the press "in Vinezia" in 1549, but from the title-page of which Vandalism has cut an earlier possessor's inscription. What has its story been, spread over three centuries and a half? Here, too, is the little so-called life of Oliver Cromwell, written in the days of fervid faithfulness to a faithless dynasty immediately after the Restoration; a contemporary has become an indignant marginalian, and has added further abuse to the vituperation of the anonymous biographer. The whirligig of a couple of centuries has passed the book—through how many hands!—into the brief possession of an ardent Cromwellian. *Apres moi?* Having survived so long, it may

fall into hands, respectless of its age, that will fling it with other books into the dust-bin. I have heard all too recently of such being done to be able to forget the possibility. Here is another interesting piece of Cromwelliana in a small surreptitiously-published volume (1676) of "Literæ Pseudo-Senatus Anglicani, Cromwellii, Reliquorumque Perduellium nomine ac jussu conscriptæ a Joanne Miltono." The book belonged, in its early days judging by the fashion of the caligraphy, to "E Cheyn," and it has travelled, for it has twice been marked to tempt purchasers "2 f. 50 c." and "2s." before it fell into my hands in the year of the first Victorian Jubilee.

Apres moi? It is sad to contemplate the breaking up of a collection of books — sad as the breaking up of a home—sad to think of the usual fate of books when their collector has himself been added to Time's collection. Often the volumes are portioned out, by folk who know nothing of their value, as *memento mori* among relatives and friends who *think* that they would like to have them. The thought is too often born but of sentiment and early grief, and the books are valued but as long as

these last. Sometimes—and if their number runs to thousands, it is not an unusual course—the volumes are sent off to Wellington Street, Leicester Square, or Chancery Lane, and the collection is reduced to "lots" by the iconoclastic hammer of the auctioneer; or, if fewer, they may be dragged in at the fag-end of the local auction of the goods, chattels, and effects of Autolycus Esquire, bankrupt (either of money or of life—the result is the same). In the latter case the books may find temporary asylum at a local bookdealer's, or they may be bought by people who do not really want them, but only buy because they are "going cheap." It is sad, this breaking up of a collection, but sooner or later it is inevitable, and perhaps, after all, it is best so, for the collection is in a sense the very individuality of the author translated into terms of books and—the collector dead, the soul of the collection has passed away too, and the whole is resolved into so many biblical units again, and many of these will, after a while, be absorbed into fresh wholes. Such is the law of growth as manifested in libraries—for a library must grow, or it is such but in name. The man who would buy

a library already formed is worse than the man who would buy his house ready furnished—he is a moneyed automaton, dead so far as individuality is concerned, and the chances are against his developing an individuality from the furniture and the books (which are to him *but* furniture) amid which mere money, and not circumstance controlled by character, has placed him. I am concerned not with such. Let not the true book-lover be saddened by the contemplation of the final breaking up of his collection, for most that is best in it will finally be absorbed in other collections; and to ensure this, if he be the happy possessor of biblical rarities, let him devise them to the British Museum, to the library of his University, to the London Library, or some such place where they can longest withstand the final conqueror of book-makers, book-collectors, and of books. *Apres moi*—I wish my best books no better fate.

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